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METROPOLITAN
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LETTERS FROM ENGLAND

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LETTERS FROM ENGLAND

BY

KAREL ČAPEK

TRANSLATED BY PAUL SELVER

METROPOLITAN BOROUGH OF BETHNAL GREEN PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Geoffrey Bles Suffolk St., Pall Mall

London

[1925]

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IN ENGLAND

First published March, 1925.

First Impressions

"YOU must begin from the beginning," I was advised, but as I have now been for ten days on this Babel of an island the beginning has got lost. What am I to begin with? Fried bacon, or the Exhibition at Wembley? Mr. Shaw, or the London policemen? I see that my beginning is very muddled; but with regard to these policemen I must remark that they are recruited according to their beauty and size; they are like gods, a head taller than mortal men, and their power is unlimited. When one of these bobbies, two metres high, raises his hand in Piccadilly, Saturn comes to a standstill and Uranus stops on his celestial path waiting until Bobby lowers his hand again. I have never seen anything so superhuman.

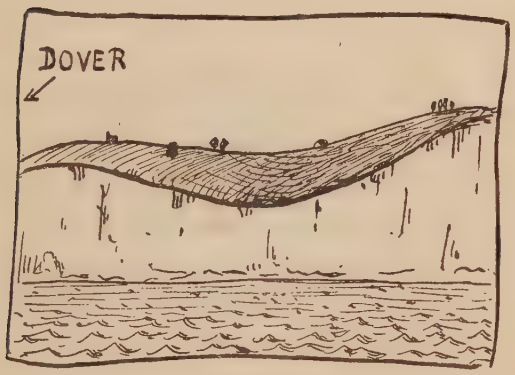
The greatest surprise for a traveller is when he discovers in a foreign country what he has read about or seen in pictures hundreds of times. I was amazed when I found the Milan Cathedral at Milan or the Coliseum at Rome. The effect is a little uncanny; you have the feeling that you have already been there at some time, perhaps in a dream, or that in some way or other you are repeating an experience of long ago. You are startled to find that there really are windmills and canals in Holland, and that the London Strand actually contains so many people that it quite upsets you.

There are two impressions which are completely fantastic: to discover something unexpected, and to discover something altogether familiar. One is always taken aback to meet an old acquaintance unawares. Well, in the same way I was astonished when I discovered the Houses of Parliament by the Thames, gentlemen in grey top-hats in the streets, two-metre bobbies at the cross-roads, and so on. It was astonishing

to find that England is really so English.

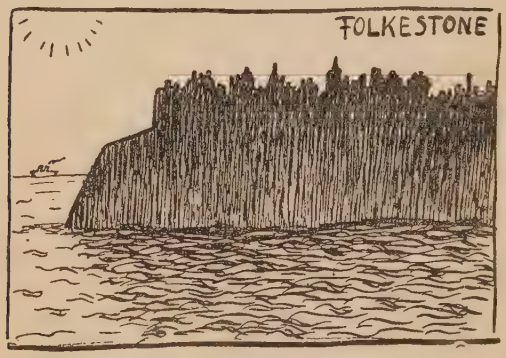
But to begin actually from the beginning I will draw a little picture of how England looks when you approach it from the English Channel.

The white part consists simply of rocks,



and grass grows on the top. It is built quite solidly on rock, so to say; but to have a continent under your feet feels somewhat safer, I must admit. Now I will draw Folkestone, where I disembarked. In the sunset it looked like a castle with battlements; later it turned out that these were only

chimneys. Having landed, I discovered to my horror that I could neither speak nor understand a word of English. So I hid myself in the nearest train; fortunately it proved to be bound for London. On the journey I observed that what I had regarded



as England is really only a large English park, just fields and meadows, lovely trees, adorable field paths, with sheep here and there, as in Hyde Park. There are surprisingly few people about; in Czechoslovakia one is accustomed to see somebody busying himself on every inch of the soil.

At last the train bores its way between

houses of a curious sort ; there are a hundred of them entirely alike ; then a whole streetful alike ; and again, and again. This produces the effect of a fashion craze. The train flies past a whole town which is beset by some terrible curse ; inexorable Fate has decreed that each house shall have two pillars at the door. For another huge block she has decreed iron balconies. The following block she has perpetually condemned to grey bricks. On another mournful street she has relentlessly imposed blue verandahs. Then there is a whole quarter doing penance for some unknown wrong by placing five steps before every front door. I should be enormously relieved if even one house had only three ; but for some reason that is not possible. And another street is entirely red.

Then I stepped out of the train and fell into the arms of a guardian angel speaking a language I could understand. I was guided to the right and to the left, up and down ; I can tell you, it was fearful.

They bundled me into another train and

took me out at Surbiton, comforted and fed me, and laid me in a feather bed, and there was darkness, just as at home, stillness, just as at home, and the dreams I dreamed were of all sorts, something about the steamer, something about Prague, and something strange, which I have forgotten.

I thank Heaven that I did not have fifty dreams alike, one after the other. I thank Heaven that dreams at least are not turned out wholesale.

The English Park

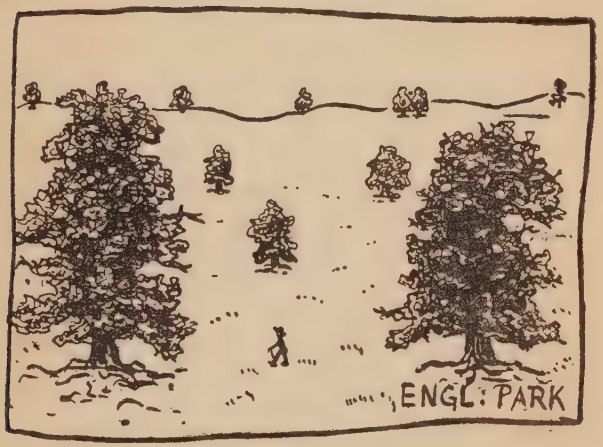
THE trees are perhaps the most beautiful things in England. Of course the meadows and the policemen too, but chiefly the trees, splendidly broad-shouldered, ancient, generous, free, venerable, vast trees. Trees of Hampton Court, Richmond Park, Windsor, and I know not where else besides. It is possible that these trees have a great influence on Toryism in England. I think they preserve the aristocratic instincts, the historical sense, Conservatism, tariffs, golf, the House of Lords, and other odd and antique things. I should probably be a rabid Radical if I lived in the Street of the Iron Balconies or in the Street of the Grey Bricks; but sitting under an ancient oak tree in the park at Hampton Court I was seriously tempted to acknowledge the

value of old things, the high mission of old trees, the harmonious comprehensiveness of tradition, and the legitimacy of esteem for everything that is strong enough to preserve itself for ages.

It seems that in England there are many such ancient trees ; in nearly everything that is met with here, in the clubs, in the literature, in the homes, you can somehow feel the timber and foliage of aged, venerable, and fearfully solid trees. As a matter of fact, nothing conspicuously new can be seen here—only the Tube is new, and perhaps that is why it is so ugly. But old trees and old things contain imps, eccentric and jocular sprites : the English also contain pixies. They are enormously solemn, solid and venerable ; suddenly there is a sort of rumbling within them, they make a grotesque remark, a fork of pixie-like humour flies out of them, and once more they have the solemn appearance of an old leather armchair.

I do not know why, but this sober England strikes me as the most fairylike and romantic

of all countries which I have seen. Perhaps this is on account of the old trees. Or no, it is perhaps the result of the greensward. It is because you walk here across the fields instead of upon footpaths. We Continental people do not venture to walk except on



roads and paved paths; this certainly has a huge influence upon the development of our minds. When I saw the first gentleman strolling across the greensward in the park at Hampton Court, I imagined that he was a creature from fairyland, although he wore

a top-hat; I expected that he would ride into Kingston upon a stag, or that he would begin to dance, or that the park-keeper would come up and give him a terrible wigging. Nothing happened, and at last even I ventured to make my way straight across the grass to an old oak. Nothing happened! Never have I had a feeling of such unrestricted liberty as in that moment. It is very curious; here evidently man is not regarded as an obnoxious animal. Here the dismal tradition is not current that the grass will not grow beneath his hoofs. Here he has the right to walk across the meadow as if he were a wood-nymph or a landed proprietor. I think that this has a considerable influence upon his character and view of the world. It opens up the marvellous possibility of walking elsewhere than along a road, without regarding oneself as a beast of prey, a footpad, or an anarchist.

All this I pondered about beneath an oak tree in the park at Hampton Court, but at least even old roots cause discomfort. Any-

how, I am sending you a picture of what an English park looks like. I wanted to draw a stag there as well, but I must admit that I cannot manage it from memory.

London Streets

AS regards London itself, it smells of petrol, burnt grass, and tallow, thus differing from Paris, where unto these are added the odour of powder, coffee and cheese. In Prague each street has a different smell ; in this respect there is no place to beat Prague. The voices of London are a more complicated matter ; the inner districts, such as the Strand or Piccadilly, sound, I assure you, like a spinning-mill with thousands of spindles ; it clatters, rattles, whirs, mutters, whizzes and rumbles with thousands of packed motor-lorries, buses, cars, and steam tractors ; and you sit on the top of a bus which cannot move forward and clatters to no purpose, you are shaken up by its rattling and leap about on your seat like some queer stuffed puppet. Then there are side-streets, gardens, squares,

roads and groves and crescents up to the wretched street in Notting Hill, where I am writing this: all of them streets of Two Pillars, streets of Similar Railings, streets of Seven Steps In Front of Each House, and so on; now here, a sort of desperate series of variations on the sound " i " proclaims the milkman, a woeful " ieiei " merely denotes firewood, " uó " is the coalman's war-cry, and the ghastly yell of a delirious sailor announces that a youth is hawking five cabbage heads in a perambulator. And by night the cats make love as savagely as on the roofs of Palermo, in spite of all reports about English Puritanism. Only the people here are quieter than elsewhere; they talk to each other half-heartedly, and their aim is to get home with the least possible delay. And that is the strangest thing about the English streets: here you do not see respectable ladies telling each other on the kerb what happened at the Smiths or the Greens, nor courting couples strolling arm-in-arm like sleep-walkers, nor worthy citizens seated on their doorstep

with their hands on their knees (by the way, here I have not yet seen a carpenter or a locksmith or a workshop or a journeyman or an apprentice ; here are nothing but shops, nothing but shops, nothing but Westminster Bank and Midland Bank, Ltd.), nor men drinking in the street, nor benches in the market-square, nor idlers, nor tramps, nor servant-girls, nor pensioners—in short, nothing, nothing, nothing ; the London streets are just a gulley through which life flows to get home. In the streets people do not live, stare, talk, stand or sit ; they merely rush through the streets. Here the street is not the most interesting of places, where a thousandfold spectacle meets your gaze, and where a thousand adventures address themselves to you ; a place where people whistle or scuffle, bawl, flirt, rest, poetize or philosophize, and enjoy life and indulge in jokes or politics and band themselves together in twos, in threes, in families, in throngs, or in revolutions. In our country, in Italy, in France, the street is a sort of large tavern or

public garden, a village green, a meeting-place, a playground and theatre, an extension of home and doorstep ; here it is something which belongs to nobody, and which does not bring anyone closer to his fellows ; here you do not meet with people, and things, but merely avoid them.

In our country a man thrusts his head out of the window, and he is right in the street.

But the English home is separated from the street not merely by a curtain in the window, but also by a garden and a railing, ivy, a patch of grass, a door-knocker and age-old tradition. The English home must have its own garden, for the street does not provide it with a queer and delightful pleasaunce ; in the garden it must have its own swing or playground, because the street does not provide it with a playground or the diversions

of a skating-rink. The poetry of the English home exists at the expense of the English street which is devoid of poetry. And here no revolutionary throngs will ever march through the streets, because these streets are too long. And also too dull.

Thank goodness that there are buses here, vessels of the desert, camels bearing you on their backs through the infinity of bricks and mortar which is London. One of the things which puzzle me is that they do not miss the way, although, for the greater part, they do not steer by sun or stars, owing to the cloudy condition of the atmosphere here. I still do not know by what secret signs the driver distinguishes Ladbroke Grove from Great Western Road or Kensington Park Road. I do not know why he should prefer to take a trip to East Acton, instead of riding to Pimlico or Hammersmith. For all these places are so curiously alike that I cannot imagine why he should have specialized in East Acton. Perhaps he has a house there, one of those with two pillars and seven steps

by the door. These houses look rather like family vaults ; I tried to make a drawing of them, but do what I would, I was unable to obtain a sufficiently hopeless appearance ; besides, I have no grey paint to smear over them.

Before I forget : of course, I went to look at Baker Street, but I came back terribly disappointed. There is not the slightest trace of Sherlock Holmes there : it is a business thoroughfare of unexampled respectability, which serves no higher purpose than to lead to Regent's Park, which, after a long endeavour, it almost manages to achieve. If we also briefly touch upon its underground railway station, we have exhausted everything, including our patience.

Traffic

BUT as long as I live I shall never become reconciled to what is known here as " traffic," that is, the volume of vehicles in the streets. I recall with horror the day on which they first brought me to London. At the outset they conveyed me by train, then they rushed through some huge glass halls and thrust me into a barred cage which looks like scales for weighing cattle ; this is a lift, and down it went through an ugly steel-plated well, whereupon they drew me out and led me through serpentine subterranean passages ; it was like a nightmare. Then there was a sort of tunnel or channel with railway lines, and a snorting train flew in ; they hurled me into it, and the train flew on ; the atmosphere was oppressive with a mildewy closeness,

evidently owing to the proximity of hell, thereupon they again took me out and rushed me through new catacombs to a moving staircase, which clatters like a mill and hastens upwards with the people on it; I tell you, it is like a fever. Then more stairs and staircases, and in spite of my objections they led me out into the street, where my heart sank. Without end or interruption moves a fourfold girdle of vehicles; buses, panting mastodons dashing along in droves with flocks of tiny mortals on their backs; purring motor-cars, lorries, steam engines, cyclists, buses, buses, flying packs of motor-cars, people rushing along, tractors, ambulances, people scrambling like squirrels on to the tops of buses, a new flock of motor elephants, that's it, and now it all comes to a standstill, a grunting and rattling flood, and it cannot move forward; but I cannot move forward either, recalling the horror which was then aroused in me by the idea that I must get to the other side of the street. I managed it with a certain amount of success, and since

then I have crossed the London streets on countless occasions, but as long as I live I shall never become reconciled to it.

Then I returned from London, crushed, despairing, overwhelmed in mind and body ; for the first time in my life I experienced a blind and furious repugnance to modern civilization. It seemed to me that there was something barbarous and disastrous in this dread accumulation of people ; it is said that there are seven and a half millions of them here, but I did not count them. I only know that my first impression of this huge assembly was almost a tragic one ; I felt uneasy and I had a boundless yearning for Prague, as if I were a child who had lost its way in a forest. Yes, I may as well confess to you that I was afraid ; I was afraid that I should get lost, that I should be run over by a motor-bus, that something would happen to me, that it was all up with me, that human life is worthless, that man is a large-sized bacillus swarming by the million on a sort of mouldy potato, that perhaps the whole thing

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PURVEYORS
HIS MASTE
VOICE
MAPLES
FRIDGE
VIROL
FOR SALE
TO BE LET
TOBACCO
LIVER PILLS
DINING
UNDERGROUND
SHOES

TRAFFIC

was only a bad dream, that mankind would perish as the result of some dreadful catastrophe, that man is powerless, that for no reason whatever I should burst out crying, and that everyone would laugh at me—the whole seven and a half millions of them. Perhaps some time later on I shall realize what at the first sight of it frightened me so much and filled me with endless uneasiness. But never mind now, to-day I have become a little used to it ; I walk, run, move out of the way, ride, climb to the tops of vehicles or rush through lifts and tubes just like anyone else, but only on one condition—that I do not think about it. As soon as I want to bear in mind what is happening around me, I again have the tormenting feeling of something evil, ghastly and disastrous, for which I am no match. And then, do you know, I am unbearably distressed.

And sometimes the whole lot comes to a standstill for half an hour, simply because there is too much of it. Sometimes at Charing Cross a knot is formed, and before they

unravel it, there is a stoppage of conveyances from the Bank to somewhere in Brompton Road, and in the meanwhile you in your vehicle can reflect on what it will be like in twenty years. As such a congestion arises quite often, many people reflect about this. It has not yet been decided whether they are to walk on the roofs or under the earth ; the only certain thing is that it cannot be done on the earth—which is a remarkable achievement of modern civilization. As regards myself, I give precedence to the earth, like the giant Antaeus. I have drawn you a picture, but the real thing is even worse, because it roars like a factory. On the other hand, the chauffeurs do not sound their hooters like mad and the people do not call each other names ; they are such quiet people.

In the meanwhile I have found out, among other things, that the wild cry " o-ei-o " in the street means potatoes ; " oi " is oil, and " u-u " is a bottle of something mysterious. And sometimes in the most important streets

a whole band takes up its position on the edge of the kerb and plays, blowing trumpets, beating drums and collecting pennies, or an Italian tenor comes in front of the windows and sings "Rigoletto," "Trovatore," or a fervid song of yearning, just as in Naples. But I have met only a single person who whistled; it was in Cromwell Road, and he was a negro.

Hyde Park

AND when I felt most depressed in this country of England—it was an English Sunday, blighted by unutterable boredom—I made my way along Oxford Street; I simply wanted to go eastwards, so as to be nearer my native land, but I made a mistake in the direction and journeyed due west, whereupon I found myself by Hyde Park. It is there known as Marble Arch, because of a marble gateway, which leads nowhere; I really do not know why it stands there. I felt rather sorry for it, so I went to inspect it; and while doing so, I saw something and hurried up to see what it was, because of the crowds of people that were there. And when I realized what was happening, I at once felt more cheerful.

It was a large open space, and anyone who

like to, can bring along a chair or a platform or nothing at all, and can start talking. After awhile he has five or twenty or three hundred people listening to him; they answer him, raise objections, nod their heads and sometimes they join the orator in singing sacred or profane hymns. Sometimes an opponent gets the people on to his side and begins to hold forth on his own; sometimes the crowd divides by a mere splitting and swelling like the lowest organisms and cell colonies. Some clusters are of a firm and steadfast consistency, others perpetually crumble and overflow, increase in size, become distended, multiply or scatter. The larger churches have perambulating pulpits, but most of the orators simply stand on the ground, suck at a moist cigarette and preach about vegetarianism, about God, about education, about reparations, or about spiritualism. Never in my life have I seen anything like it.

Because, sinful man that I am, I had not been present at any preaching for several years, I went to listen. Prompted by mod-

esty I joined only a small and quiet group ; the speaker there was a hunch-backed youth with fine eyes, evidently a Polish Jew ; after some considerable time I realized that his subject was merely schooling, and I passed over to a large crowd where an old gentleman in a top-hat was jumping about in a pulpit. I ascertained that he represented some Hyde Park Mission ; he flung his hands about so much that I was afraid he would tumble over the hand-rail. At another crowd a middle-aged lady was preaching ; I am by no means opposed to feminine emancipation, but the female voice, you know—well, one simply cannot listen to it. As a public speaker woman has been handicapped by nature on account of her vocal organs. When a lady speechifies, I always have the feeling that I am a small boy and that my mamma is scolding me. Why this English lady with the pince-nez was scolding I did not properly comprehend ; I only know that she was shouting to us that we should look into our hearts. At another crowd a Catholic was

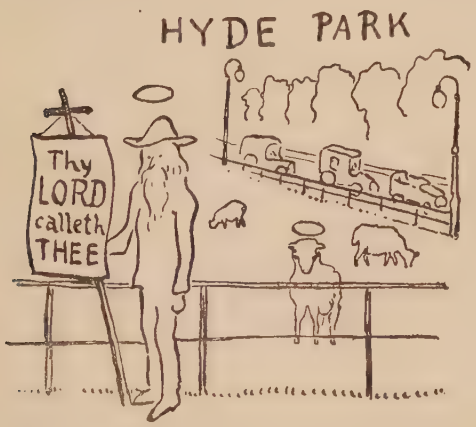
preaching beneath a high crucifix; for the first time in my life I beheld the proclaiming of the faith to heretics. It was extremely nice and concluded with song, in which I attempted to sing alto; unfortunately I did not know the tune. A few crowds were devoted exclusively to song; in their midst a little man takes his stand with a baton, gives the note and the whole crowd sings, and indeed in a very decent and polyphonic manner. I wanted to listen in silence, for I don't belong to this parish, but my neighbour, a gentleman in a top-hat, urged me to sing too, so I sang aloud and glorified the Lord without words and without tune. A pair of lovers comes this way, the youth takes the cigarette from his mouth and sings, the girl also sings, an old lord sings, and a youth with a cane under his arm sings, and the shabby little man in the midst of the circle gracefully conducts as in Grand Opera; nothing here has pleased me so much before. I sang with two other churches besides this and listened to a sermon on Socialism and to

the gospel of a Metropolitan Secular Society ; I stood for a while by some tiny debating groups ; one extremely tattered gentleman was vindicating the conservative principles of society, but he spoke with such a dreadful

Cockney accent that I did not understand him at all. His adversary was an evolutionary socialist, who had every appearance of being a superior bank clerk. Another group comprised only five members ; there was a

brown Indian, a one-eyed man wearing a cap, a stout Armenian Jew and two taciturn men with pipes ; the one-eyed man declared with a fearful pessimism that " something is sometimes nothing," while the Indian advocated the more cheerful view that " something is sometimes something," which he repeated twenty times in very tumbledown English. Then there was an old fellow standing there who held a long cross and on it a banner with the inscription, " Thy Lord calleth thee " ; he was saying something in a weak and husky voice, but nobody was listening to him. So I, a lost foreigner, came to a standstill and supplied him with an audience of one. Then I wanted to go my way, for it was already night ; but I was stopped by a man in a nervous state, but I do not know what he said to me ; I told him that I was a stranger, that London was a terrible affair, but that I was fond of the English ; that I had already been about the world a little, but that few things pleased me so much as the orators in Hyde Park.

Before I had told him all this twenty people were standing round and quietly listening; I might have endeavoured to found a new church, but no sufficiently indubitable article of faith occurred to me, and besides I do not know English well enough, so I cleared off.



Behind the railings in Hyde Park the sheep were grazing; and when I looked at them, one, evidently the oldest, stood up and began to bleat; so I listened to its sheepish preaching, and not until it had had its say did I go home, contented and purified as if after

divine service. I might make this a starting-point for admirable reflections on democracy, the English character, the need for faith and other things ; but I would rather leave the whole occurrence in its natural beauty.

In the Natural History Museum

"HAVE you been to the British Museum?"

"Have you seen the Wallace Collection?"

"Have you been to the Tate Gallery yet?"

"Have you seen Madame Tussaud's?"

"Have you had a look at South Kensington Museum?"

"Have you been to the National Gallery?"

Yes, yes, yes, I have been everywhere; but now permit me to sit down and talk about something else. What was I going to say? Yes, nature is strange and mighty: and I, an unwearied pilgrim to pictures and statues, must confess that I derived the greatest delight from the sea-shells and crystals in the Natural History Museum. Of course, the mammoths and iguanoda are

also very fine ; likewise the fish, the butterflies, the antelopes and the other beasts of the field ; but the sea-shells and conches are the prettiest, for they look as if they had been created for its amusement by a divinely playful spirit, fascinated by countless possibilities. They are pink, tempting like a girl's mouth, purple, amber-coloured, mother-of-pearl and black, white, streaked, heavy as an anvil and as filigree as Queen Mab's powder-puff, twisted, fluted, spiky, oval, bearing a likeness to kidneys, eyes, lips, arrows, helmets and nothing on earth ; translucent, opalescent, dainty, terrifying and indescribable. What was I going to say ? Yes, when I was passing through the hordes and treasures of art, the collections of furniture, weapons, garments, carpets, carvings, porcelain, things chased, engraved, woven, kneaded, hammered, inlaid, and painted, enamelled and embroidered and woven, I again saw : nature is strange and mighty. All these are other sea-shells, produced by the urge of another divine and vehement playfulness ; all this was

put forth by a soft and naked snail, trembling with creative frenzy. O magnificent tiny thing, Natsuke of Japan or eastern fabric, if I could have you with me at home, how I should prize you ! As a human secret, the

manifestation of a mortal, a speech strange and graceful. But in this terrible and unbounded accumulation there are no individual objects, nor personal hands nor history ; here is only frenzied nature, animal creativeness, a fantastic abundance of strange and beauti-

ful sea-shells collected from a timeless ocean. Be ye also like nature ; create, create, things strange, beautiful, fluted or twisted, pied and translucent ; the more lavishly, strangely and purely you create, the nearer will you be to nature or perhaps to God. Mighty is nature.

But I must not forget the crystals, their shapes, laws and colours. There are crystals as big as cathedral pillars, delicate as mildew and sharp as needles ; plain, blue, green like nothing in the world, of fiery colours or black ; mathematical, perfect, like the contrivances of queer and bewildered sages ; or recalling livers, hearts, gigantic human organs and animal fluids. There are crystalline caves or spectral bubbles or mineral dough ; there is mineral fermenting, grilling, growth, architecture and engineering ; I vow that a Gothic church is not the most complicated of crystals. Even within us there persists a crystalline power ; even Egypt crystallized in pyramids and obelisks, Greece in pillars, Gothic in pinaches and London in cubes of black mud ; countless laws of structure and

composition pass through matter like secret mathematical lightning flashes. We must be exact, mathematical and geometrical, in order to be equal to nature. Number and fantasy, law and abundance are the feverish forces of nature ; not sitting down beneath a green tree, but creating crystals and ideas denotes becoming as nature ; creating laws and forms : penetrating matter with glowing flashes of divine computation.

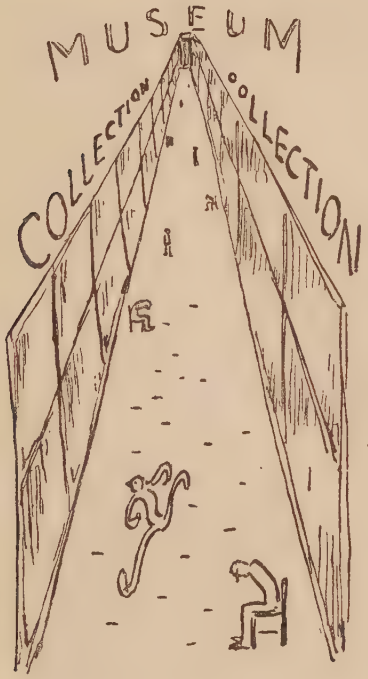
Ah, how scantily eccentric, how scantily daring and precise is poetry !

The Pilgrim Goes Over More Museums

WEALTHY England has amassed the treasures of the whole world in her collections ; none too creative herself, she has carted away the metope of the Acropolis and the Egyptian colossi of porphyry or granite, the Assyrian bas-reliefs, knotty plastic works of ancient Yucatan, smiling Buddhas, Japanese wood-carvings and lacquer-work, the pick of continental art and a medley of souvenirs from the colonies : iron-work, fabrics, glass, vases, snuff-boxes, book-bindings, statues, pictures, enamel, inlaid escritoires, Saracen swords, and heaven alone knows what else ; perhaps everything in the world that is of any value.

I now should assuredly be very learned about various styles and cultures ; I should relate something about the stages in the

development of art; in my head I should sort out and distribute all this material, which is here exhibited for wonderment and instruc-



tion. But instead of this I have rent my garment, and I ask: Where is the perfection of man? How dreadful that it is every-

where ; how awful a discovery to find the perfection of man even at the very beginning of existence ; to find it in the formation of the first stone arrow ; to find it in a Bushman drawing ; to find it in China, in Fiji and in ancient Nineveh and in every place where man has left a memory of his creative activities. I saw so many things, and I could have chosen ; very well, then, I will tell you that I do not know whether man is more perfect, more advanced or more attractive when shaping the first urn than when decorating a splendid Portland vase ; I do not know which is more perfect : to be a cave-man, or to be an Englishman in the West End ; I do not know which is the loftier and diviner art : to paint a portrait of Queen Victoria on canvas or the portrait of a penguin with one's fingers in the air, as is done by the aborigines of Terra del Fuego. I tell you, this is a dreadful thing ; dreadful is the relativity of culture and history ; nowhere behind us or before us is there a point of rest, of an ideal, of the finish and perfection

of man ; for it is everywhere and nowhere, and every spot in space and time where man has set up his work is unsurpassable. And now I really cannot tell whether a portrait by Rembrandt is more perfect than a dancing mask from the Gold Coast ; I have seen too much. We, too, must equal Rembrandt or a mask from the Gold or Ivory Coast ; there is no progress, there is no " above " or " below " ; there is only an unendingly new creativeness. This is the only lesson to be learnt from the history, cultures, collections and treasures of the whole world : create like savages, create perpetually ; at this spot, in this moment, the acme of perfection of human work is to be created ; it is necessary to mount as high as fifty thousand years ago or as in the Gothic Madonna, or as in that stormy landscape by Constable. If there are ten thousand traditions, there is no tradition at all ; nothing can be selected from all-abundance ; the only thing that can be done is to add to it something previously non-existent.

If you search in the London collections for ivory carvings or embroidered tobacco-pouches, you will find them ; if you search for the perfection of human work, you will find it in the Indian museum and the Babylonian gallery, in the Daumiers, Turners, and Watteaus, or in the Elgin marbles. But then you leave this accumulation of all the world's treasures and you can ride for hours and miles on the top of a bus from Ealing to East Ham, and from Clapham to Bethnal Green ; and you will scarcely find a place where your eye could derive pleasure from the beauty and lavishness of human work. Art is what is deposited behind glass in galleries, museums and in the rooms of rich people ; but it does not move about here in the streets, it does not twinkle from the handsome cornices of windows, it does not take up its stand at the street-corner like a statue, it does not greet you in a winsome and monumental speech. I do not know : perhaps after all it is only Protestantism which has drained this country dry in an artistic respect.

The Pilgrim Sees Animals and Famous People

I SHOULD be ashamed if I had not been in the Zoo and Kew Gardens, for you are to know everything. So I saw the elephants bathing and the leopards warming their supple bellies in the evening sun; I took a peep at the terrible mouth of the hippopotamus, like gigantic ox-lungs; I looked at the giraffes, which smile in a delicate and reserved manner like elderly spinsters; I watched the lion asleep, the monkeys embracing, and the orang-outang putting a basket on his head as we human beings don a hat; the Indian peacock opened its tail for me and turned itself about, scraping challengingly with its claw; the fish in the aquarium shimmered in all the colours of the rainbow; and the rhinoceros seemed to

be fastened inside a skin which had been sewn on to a still larger beast. Enough now, I have enumerated enough of this ; I wish to see nothing more.

But as on that occasion I was unable to draw stags from memory, I hastened into Richmond Park where there are whole herds of them. They come up close to people,

without the least fuss, and they show a preference for vegetarians. Though it is quite a difficult task to catch stags, I succeeded in drawing a whole flock. Behind them a courting couple were lingering in the grass ; I did not include them in my picture, for what they were doing is done by lovers in our country also, but not publicly.

I got covered with sweat in the tropic greenhouses at Kew amongst palms, lianes

and everything that rankly sprouts from a foolish earth ; I went to look at the soldier who, in a huge sheep-skin cap and a red coat, runs up and down in front of the Tower and at every turn stamps his feet in such an odd way, as when a dog scrapes in the sand with his hind legs ; I do not know to what historical event this peculiar custom refers.

Then I was at Madame Tussaud's. Madame Tussaud's is a museum of famous people, or rather of their wax-effigies. The Royal Family is there (also King Alphonso, somewhat moth-eaten). Mr. MacDonald's Ministry, French Presidents, Dickens and Kipling, marshals, Mademoiselle Lenglen, famous murderers of last century and souvenirs of Napoleon, such as his socks, belt and hat ; then in a place of dishonour Kaiser Wilhelm and Franz Josef, still looking spruce for his age. Before one particularly effective effigy of a gentleman in a top-hat I stopped and looked into the catalogue to see who it was ; suddenly the gentleman with the top-hat moved and walked away ;

it was awful. After a while two young ladies looked into the catalogue to see whom I represented. At Madame Tussaud's I made a somewhat unpleasant discovery: either I am quite incapable of reading human faces, or else physiognomies are deceptive. So for example I was at first sight attracted by a seated gentleman with a goatee beard, No. 12. In the catalogue I found: "12. Thomas Neill Cream, hanged in 1892. Poisoned Matilda Glover with strychnine. He was also found guilty of murdering three other women." Really, his face is very suspicious. No. 13, Franz Müller, murdered Mr. Briggs in the train. H'm. No. 20, a clean-shaven gentleman, of almost worthy appearance: Arthur Devereux, hanged 1905, known as the "trunk murderer," because he hid the corpses of his victims in trunks. Horrid. No. 21—no, this worthy priest cannot be "Mrs. Dyer, the Reading baby murderess." I now perceive that I have confused the pages of the catalogue, and I am compelled to correct my impressions: the seated gentle-

man, No. 12, is merely Bernard Shaw; No. 13 is Louis Blériot, and No. 20 is simply Guglielmo Marconi.

Never again will I judge people by their faces.

Clubs

HOW am I to put it modestly? Yes, I have obtained the undeserved honour of being introduced into some of the most exclusive London clubs, a thing that does not happen to every wayfarer, and I will endeavour to describe what it is like there. There is one, the name of which I have forgotten, and I do not even know in which street it is situated. But they led me through a mediæval passage, then to the left and to the right, and again in yet another direction, till we reached a house with completely blank windows, and then inside, where it resembled a shed, and from there into a cellar, and there was the club; there were boxers and authors and pretty girls, oak tables and a clay floor, a mere handful of a place, a fantastic and terrible den; I

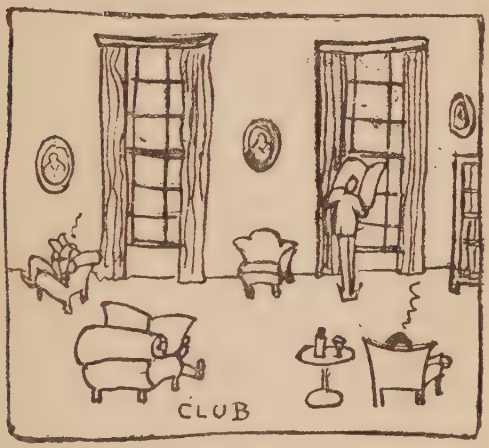
thought that they would kill me there, but they gave me food on earthenware plates, and were nice and kind; then I was led off by a South African running and jumping champion, and I still remember a pretty girl who learnt Czech from me.

The second club is famous, ancient, and tremendously venerable; it used to be frequented by Herbert Spencer and Dickens and many others, all of whom the head waiter, major-domo or porter (or whoever he was) there mentioned to me; perhaps he had read all of them, for he seemed to be very refined and dignified, as keepers of records are wont to be. He led me through the whole of this historical place; showed me the library, the reading-room, the old engravings, the heated lavatories, bathrooms, the historical arm-chairs, the rooms where gentlemen smoke, other rooms where they write and smoke, and others where they smoke and read; on all sides was wafted the smell of tradition and old leather chairs. My word, if we had such old leather chairs

we should also have a tradition ; just imagine the historical continuity which would come into existence if F. Goetz were to occupy the chair in which Zákrejs used to sit, Šrámek that of Šmilovsky, and Professor Rádl, let us say, that of the late lamented Hattala.[1] Our tradition is not based upon such old, and especially such comfortable arm-chairs. As it has nowhere to sit, it hangs in the air. I thought of that when I was taking my ease in one of those historical arm-chairs ; I had a somewhat historical feeling, but was otherwise quite cosy, and I took a peep at the historical personalities, who were partly hanging on the walls, partly sitting in the club chairs and reading *Punch* or *Who's Who*. Nobody spoke, and this produced a truly dignified effect ; we in our country ought to have such places where silence is preserved. An old gentleman shuffled along on two sticks across the room, and nobody malici-

[1] As English equivalents for these three pairs of names may be suggested Edward Shanks and Professor Dowden ; D. H. Lawrence and Silas Hocking ; Lascelles Abercrombie and Professor Skeat.

ously told him that he was looking first-rate. Another buried himself in a newspaper (I could not see his face) without feeling a passionate need to talk to somebody else about politics. A man from the Continent



gives himself an air of importance by talking ; an Englishman by holding his tongue. It seemed to me that all who were there were Members of the Royal Academy, the illustrious dead, or ex-Ministers, for none of them spoke ; nobody looked at me when I went in, and nobody when I came out. I

wanted to be as they were, but I did not know what to do with my eyes ; when I do not speak I look about me, and when I do not look about me I think of queer comic things, and so what happened was that I burst out laughing. Nobody looked at me ;

it was overwhelming. I realized that they were performing a sort of ritual, which involved the smoking of pipes, the perusal of *Who's Who*, and silence. This silence is not the silence of a man in solitude, nor the silence of a Pythagorean philosopher, nor silence in the presence of God, nor the silence of death, nor a mute brooding, it is a special

silence, a society silence, a refined silence, the silence of a gentleman among gentlemen.

I went into other clubs as well; there are many hundreds of them, various in breed and purpose, but the best ones are all in Piccadilly or thereabouts, and they have old leather arm-chairs, the ritual of silence, flawless waiters, and the ban on women; as you see, these are great advantages. Besides this, they are built in the classical style, and of stone, which is black with smoke and white with rain; the interior contains a kitchen, huge rooms, stillness, tradition, hot and cold water, a number of portraits and billiard-tables, and many other noteworthy things. There are also political clubs, and women's clubs and night-clubs, but these I did not visit.

This would be a suitable place to meditate on social life, manly monasticism, good cooking, old portraits, the English character and several other cognate questions, but as I am a wayfaring man I must move on to more and more new discoveries.

The Biggest Samples Fair; or, The British Empire Exhibition

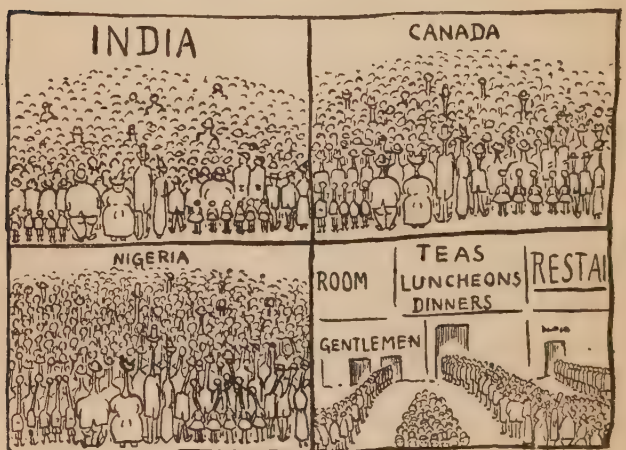
I

IF I am to tell you at the outset what there is most of at the Wembley Exhibition, then decidedly it is the people and the parties of school-children. I am all in favour of populousness, propagation, children, schools and teaching by object lesson, but I must confess that at times I should have liked to have a machine gun with me to cut my way through an agitated, pushing, rushing, trampling herd of boys with small round caps on their pates, or through a chain of girls holding hands so as not to get lost. From time to time, by dint of infinite patience, I managed to reach a stand. New Zealand apples were being sold, or rice-brooms from

Australia were exhibited, or a billiard-table manufactured in the Bermudas. I even had the luck to behold a statue of the Prince of Wales, made of Canadian butter, and it filled me with regret that the majority of London monuments are not also made of butter. Whereupon I was again thrust forward by the stream of people and gave myself up to the view of the throat of a stout gentleman or of an old lady's ear in front of me. However, I made no objection: what a crush there would be if in the Australian refrigerator section the florid throats of stout gentlemen were exhibited, or in the clay palace of Nigeria baskets containing the dried ears of old ladies.

Powerlessly I abandon the intention of producing an illustrated guide to the Wembley Exhibition. How am I to portray this commercial cornucopia? It comprises stuffed fruit, dried plums, arm-chairs manufactured in Fiji, mountains of dammar and tin ore, festoons of legs of mutton, dried copra like gigantic bunions, pyramids of preserved foods,

india-rubber lamp-shades, old English furniture from South Africa, Syrian currants, sugar-cane, walking-sticks and cheese. And New Zealand brushes, sweetstuff from Hong-kong, Malay oils, Australian perfumes, models



of some tin mines or other, gramophones from Jamaica and mountain-ranges of butter from Canada. As you see, it is a regular tour round the world, or rather a trip through an overgrown bazaar. Never have I been at so huge a fair.

The Palace of Engineering is magnificent; and the finest works of English plastic art are locomotives, ships, boilers, turbines, transformers, queer machines with two horns at the top, machines for all sorts of rotating, shaking and banging, monsters far more fantastic and infinitely more elegant than the primeval lizards in the Natural History Museum. I do not know what they are called and what they are used for, but they are superb, and sometimes a mere screw matrix (a hundred pounds in weight) is the highest pitch of formal perfection. Some machines are red like paprika, others massive and grey, some burnished with brass and others black and tremendous like a tomb, and it is odd that an age which has devised two pillars and seven steps in front of every house, should have composed in metal such inexhaustible wonders and beauties of forms and functions. And now, just imagine that this is crammed together on an area larger than the Vaclav Square, that it is larger than the Uffizi and the Vatican collections put

together, that for the most part it rotates, hisses, grinds with oiled pistons, chatters with steel jaws, fatly sweats and glistens brassily : it is the mythic emblem of the metal age. The sole perfection which modern civilization attains is a mechanical one ; machines are splendid and flawless, but the life which serves them or is served by them, is neither superb nor brilliant, nor more perfect nor more graceful ; nor is the work of the machines perfect ; only they, the machines, are like gods. And I may tell you that I discovered an actual idol in the Palace of Industry. It is a revolving invulnerable safe, a glossy armoured ball, which quietly revolves and revolves on a black altar. It is wonderful and a little uncanny.

Bear me homeward, Flying Scotsman, splendid hundred-and-fifty-ton locomotive ; carry me across the seas, O white and glittering ship ; there will I sit down on the rough field-edge where the wild thyme grows, and I will close my eyes, for I am of peasant blood and have been somewhat disturbed by

what I have seen. This perfection of matter, from which no perfection of man is derived, these brilliant implements of a grievous and unredeemed life bewilder me. Beside you, Flying Scotsman, what would that blind beggar look like who sold me matches to-day? He was blind and corroded with scabies; he was a very bad and impaired machine; in fact, he was only a man.

II

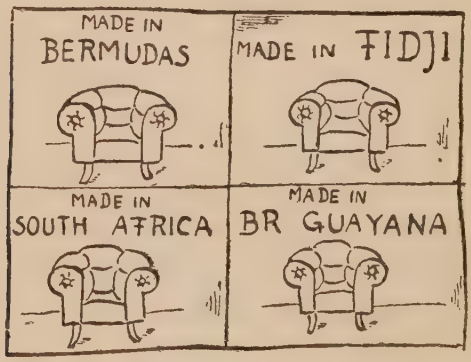
Besides the machines, the exhibition at Wembley displays a twofold spectacle: raw materials and products. The raw materials are usually more attractive and interesting. An ingot of pure tin has something more perfect about it than an engraved and hammered tin dish; russet or fiery-grey timber somewhere from Guiana or Sarawak is decidedly more attractive than a finished billiard-table, and stickily translucent raw rubber from Ceylon or Malaya is really far more beautiful and mysterious than rubber floor

coverings or a rubber beef-steak ; and I will not describe to you all the various African corn-grains, nuts from heaven knows where, berries, seeds, cores, fruits, kernels, bulbs, wheat-ears, poppy-heads, tubers, pods, piths and fibres and roots and leaves, things desiccated, floury, oily, and leafy in all colours and palpable qualities, the names of which, for the most part very beautiful, I have forgotten, and the use of which is somewhat of a riddle to me ; I think that their final mission is to lubricate machines, to imitate flour or to anoint the suspicious-looking tarts in Lyons' wholesale feeding establishments. From these flame-coloured, striped, magenta, dusky and metallically resonant timbers, of course, old English furniture is made, and not negro idols or temples or the thrones of black or brown kings. At the most only baskets or bags from bark, in which this abundance of British Imperial trade articles was conveyed here, tell their tale of the negro or Malay hands which inscribed them with the strange and beautiful technique of

their manuscript. All the rest is a European product. But no, I must not lie—not all the rest. There are a few acknowledged exotic industries, as, for example, the wholesale manufacture of Buddhas, Chinese fans, Cashmere shawls or damascene blades, which the Europeans are fond of. And here are manufactured on a large scale Sakiamunis, aniline lacquers, Chinese porcelain for export, ivory elephants and ink-pots of serpentine or talc, engraved dishes, mother-of-pearl follies and other exotic manufactures guaranteed genuine. There is no popular native art ; a Benin negro carves small figures from elephant-tusks as if he had proceeded from the Munich Academy, and if you give him a piece of wood, he will carve an easy-chair from it. Good gracious, he has evidently ceased to be a savage and has become—what ? Yes, he has become an employee of civilized industry.

There are four hundred million coloured people in the British Empire, and the only trace of them at the British Empire Exhibi-

tion consists of a few advertisement supers, one or two yellow or brown huxters and a few old relics which have been brought here for curiosity and amusement. And I do not know whether this is a terrible decadence of the coloured races or the terrible silence of



the four hundred millions; nor do I know which of these two things would be the more dreadful. The British Empire Exhibition is huge and filled to overflowing; everything is here, including the stuffed lion and the extinct emu; only the spirit of the four hundred million is missing. It is an exhibition of English trade. It is a cross-section

through that feeble stratum of European interests which have enwrapped the whole world, without troubling too much about what there is underneath. The Wembley Exhibition shows what four hundred million people are doing for Europe, and partly also what Europe is doing for them. There is not much of this even in the British Museum, the greatest colonial empire actually possesses no ethnographical museum. . . .

But withdraw from me, evil thoughts: let me rather be pushed and thrust along by the stream of people from the apples of New Zealand to the cocoa-nuts of Guinea, from the tin of Singapore to the gold ores of South Africa; let me see the distant places and zones, the minerals and products of the earth, the relics of animals and people, all the things from which, in the end, crackling pound notes are stamped. Here is everything which can be turned into money, which can be bought and sold, from a handful of corn-grains to a saloon carriage, from a piece of coal to a set of blue fox furs. My soul,

out of all these treasures of the world, what would you like to buy? Nothing, nothing whatever; I should like to be tiny, and to stand once more in old Prouza's shop at Upice, to stare, goggle-eyed, at the black gingerbread, the pepper, the ginger, the vanilla and the laurel leaves, and to think to myself that these are all the treasures of the world and the scents of Arabia and all the spices of distant lands, to be amazed, to sniff and then to run off and read a novel by Jules Verne about strange, distant and rare regions. For I, foolish soul, used to have quite a wrong idea of them.

The East End

IT starts not far beyond the centre of the world, the Bank of England, the Stock Exchange and a regular jungle of other banks and financial establishments; this Golden Shore is almost washed by the black waves of East London. "Don't go there without a guide," said the denizens of the West End to me, "and don't take much money with you." Well, that is decidedly putting it too strongly: for my part I regard Piccadilly or Fleet Street as a worse haunt of savagery than the Isle of Dogs or Limehouse of ill repute, even with Chinatown, or than the whole of Poplar, lock, stock and barrel, with the Jews, the seamen, and the misery of Rotherhithe on the other side of the river. Nothing happened to me, but I came back feeling acutely depressed, although I have

been through the abominations of the harbours at Marseilles and Palermo. The streets are very unsightly with their filthy cobbles, with their swarms of children on the pavement, with their queer Chinese types who flit like shadows past shops which are still queerer, with their drunken seamen, with their Philanthropic Shelters, with their battered-looking youths, and with their stench of scorched rags; yet I have seen worse places, flaunting misery, filthy and virulent as an ulcer, unutterable stenches and haunts viler than a wolf's den. But it is not that, it is not that. The horrible thing in East London is not what can be seen and smelt, but its unbounded and unredeemable extent. Elsewhere poverty and ugliness exist merely as a rubbish-heap between two houses, like an unsavoury nook, a cesspool or unclean offal; but here are miles and miles of grimy houses, hopeless streets, Jewish shops, a superfluity of children, gin palaces and Christian shelters. Miles and miles, from Peckham to Hackney, from Walworth to

Barking, Bermondsey, Rotherhithe, Poplar, Bromley, Stepney, Bow and Bethnal Green, the quarters inhabited by navvies, Jews, Cockneys and stevedores from the docks, poverty-stricken and downtrodden people—everything equally dull, grimy, bare and

unending, intersected by dirty channels of deafening traffic, and the whole way equally cheerless. And in the south, in the north-west, in the north-east again the same thing, miles and miles of grimy houses, where the whole street consists of nothing but a vast horizontal tenement, factories, gasometers,

railway lines, clayey patches of waste ground, storehouses for goods and storehouses for human beings. There are assuredly uglier quarters and squalider streets in all parts of the world ; even squalor is here on a higher level, and the poorest beggar is not clad in rags ; but, good heavens ! the human beings, the millions of human beings who live in this greater half of London, in these short, uniform, joyless streets, which teem on the plan of London, like worms in a huge carrion.

And that is just the distressing thing about the East End—there is too much of it ; and it cannot be re-shaped. Not even the devil as tempter would venture to say : If you will, I shall destroy this city, and in three days I will build it up anew—anew and better : not so grimy, not so mechanical, not so inhuman and bleak. If he were to say that, perhaps I would fall down and worship him. I wandered through streets whose names recall Jamaica, Canton, India or Peking ; all are alike, in all the windows there are curtains ; it might even look quite

nice if there were not five hundred thousand of such dwellings. In this overwhelming quantity it no longer looks like an excess of human beings, but like a geological formation; this black magma has been vomited up by factories; or it is a deposit of the merchandise which floats yonder along the Thames upon white ships; or it was piled up from soot and dust. Go and have a look at Oxford Street and Regent Street and the Strand, and see what fine houses people have built to hold goods, commodities, things; for the produce of man has its value. A shirt would lose in value if it were to be sold within such drab and plain walls; but man can live there, i.e. sleep, eat repulsive food, and beget children.

Perhaps some one more expert would lead you to more picturesque places, where even dirt is romantic and squalor decorative; but I have strayed into a maze of small streets and cannot find my way out. Or is it certain that these countless black streets lead anywhere at all?

In the Country

WELL now, take a seat in the train and ride off in any direction, humming a tune to the rattling of the wheels. There will parade the Streets of the Vast Number, the cupolas of gasworks, cross-roads of railway-tracks, factories, graveyards; now strips of green intrude upon the endless city, you see the tramway terminus, quiet suburbs, green grass and the first sheep bowed down to the earth in nature's eternal ceremony of feeding. And then, another half-hour, and you are outside the greatest city in the world; you alight at a small station where hospitable people are waiting for you, and you are in the English country.

Where are you to pick words fine enough to portray the quiet and verdant charms of

the English countryside? I have been down in Surrey, and up in Essex; I have wandered along roads lined with quickset hedges, sheer quickset hedges which make England the real England, for they enclose, but do not oppress; half-opened gates lead you to ancient avenues of a park deeper than a forest; and here is a red house with high chimneys, a church-

tower among the trees, a meadow with flocks of cows, a flock of horses which turn their beautiful and solemn eyes upon you; a pathway that seems to be swept as clean as a new pin, velvety pools with nenuphars and sword-lilies, parks, mansions, meadows and meadows, no fields, nothing that might be a shrill reminder of human drudgery; a paradise where the Lord God Himself made paths of asphalt and sand, planted old trees

and entwined ivy coverlets for the red houses. My uncle, a Czech farmer, would have shaken his head with disapproval on seeing the red and black flocks of cows on the finest meadows in the world, and would have said : " What a pity to waste such splendid manure." And he would say : " Why don't they sow turnips here, and here again you could have wheat and here potatoes ; and here too, I would plant cherry-trees and service-berries instead of this shrubbery, and here clover, and here too, oats, and on that stretch of land corn or rape-seed ; why, just look at the clay soil, fit to smear on bread, and they leave it for pasture-land." " You see, Uncle, they don't think it worth the labour ; they get their wheat from Australia and sugar from India and potatoes from Africa or wherever it is ; you see, Uncle, these people aren't peasants ; this is only a sort of garden." " But you know, my boy," he would say, " I like our way better ; it may only be a turnip, but at least you can see the work. But here, why, there's nobody looking after

these cows and sheep; it's a wonder they don't get stolen. Good gracious, my boy, there isn't a living soul to be seen here; only over there some one's riding along on a bicycle, and here, look out, another one of

those stinking motor-cars; my boy, doesn't anyone do any work here?"

It would be difficult to explain to my uncle the economic system of England; his hands would itch too much for the heavy plough-handle. The English countryside is not for work; it is for show. It is as green as a park and as immaculate as paradise. I sauntered along a grassy pathway in Surrey during

a tepid shower, among the stems of broom with its yellowish blossom and russet heather which stippled the light ferns; and there was nothing but the sky and round hillocks, for the houses with their inmates are tucked away amid the trees, from which a meal in preparation wafts a cheerful cloudlet. I

recall you, good old house with the raftered ceiling and the huge fireplace in which is an oaken table, and tasty is the Guildford beer in clay tankards and the gossip of cheery people over their English bacon and cheese. Once again I thank you and must now pass on.

I ambled like a wood-nymph across the

Essex paddocks, climbed over a hedge into a seigniorial park, and saw water-lilies and gladstonia on a dark pool, danced in the loft a dance which I did not know, climbed up a church tower and ten times a day was amazed at the harmony and perfection of the life with which the Englishman surrounds himself in his home. The English home, that is tennis and warm water, the gong summoning you to lunch, books, meadows, comfort selected, stabilized and blessed by the centuries, freedom of children and patriarchal disposition of parents, hospitality and a formalism as comfortable as a dressing-gown; in brief, the English home is the English home, and therefore I have drawn it from memory together with the cuckoo and the rabbit; inside there lives and writes one of the wisest men in this world, and outside the cuckoo utters its cry as much as thirty times in succession: with this I conclude the tale of the best things in England.

Cambridge and Oxford

AT first you have the impression of a provincial town ; but suddenly you wonder whose this old castle can be. It is a students' college with three courtyards, a chapel of its own, a royal hall where the students eat, a park, and I know not what else. And here is a second one, bigger still, with four courtyards, a park beyond the river, a cathedral of its own, a still bigger Gothic dining-hall, rafters five hundred years old, a gallery of old portraits, still older traditions and still more famous names. Then there is a third one which is the oldest, a fourth one distinguished for scholarship, a fifth for athletic records, a sixth because it has the finest chapel, a seventh for I know not what, and as there are at least fifteen of them, I have mixed them all

up; I see only the castellated palaces in Perpendicular style, the huge quadrangles, where the pupils move about in black gowns and square tasselled caps, each of whom has his two or three rooms in the wings of these

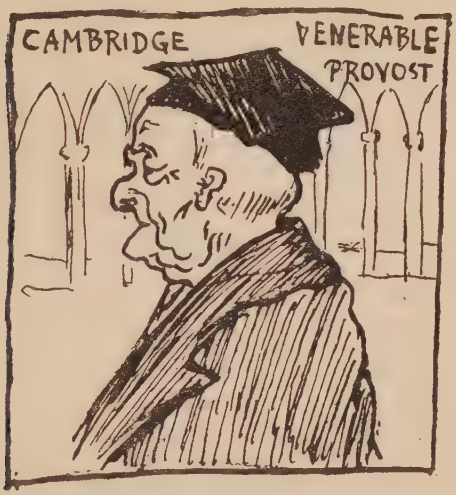
castles; I see the Gothic chapels disembowelled by Protestantism, the banquet-halls with a dais for the "masters" and "fellows," the venerable smoked portraits of earls, statesmen and poets, who went forth from there; I see the renowned "backs," i.e. the rear of the colleges above the river Cam,

over which there are bridges leading to the ancient college parks ; I float on the gentle river between the " backs " and the parks, and I think of our students, of their hollow bellies and their boots down-at-heel with trudging from lecture to lecture. I bow down to you, O Cambridge, for upon me was conferred the honour of eating on the dais among the learned masters in a hall so vast and old that I felt as if I were only dreaming about it ; I greet you with both hands, O Cambridge, for I was vouchsafed the joy of eating with students, masters and other young people from earthenware dishes in the Half Moon ; and happy I was among them.

And I have seen lawns where only the masters and not the undergraduates may walk, and staircases where only the graduates and not the students may play billiards ; I have seen professors in rabbits' fur and cloaks as red as lobsters, I have seen the graduates kneel and kiss the hand of the Vice-Chancellor ; of all these wonders I

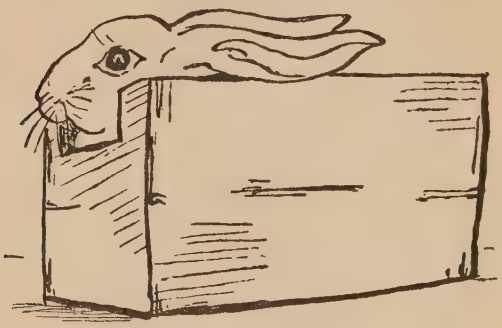
have been able to make a drawing only of one venerable college provost, who poured out for me a glass of sherry at least as old as the elder Pitt.

Sometimes, too, I dream about the Cam-



bridge rabbit. They made him breathe some gas or other, to see what his rabbity spleen would say to it. I saw him die ; he gasped and rolled his eyes. Now he haunts my dreams. God be merciful to his long-eared soul.

What evil am I to say now about Oxford? I cannot praise Oxford after having praised Cambridge; and my friendly connection with Cambridge makes it incumbent upon me to shower fire and brimstone upon haughty Oxford. Unfortunately, I liked the latter place very much; the colleges there



are still bigger and still older, they have beautiful quiet parks, galleries of equally famous ancestors, banquet-halls, memorials and dignified janitors, but all this display and tradition is not aimless; it would seem that the purpose of it is to train not learned specialists, but gentlemen. It is necessary to know this in order to comprehend England in a

somewhat different aspect. Just imagine our students lunching at the very least in the Waldstein castle hall on massive old silver, served by waiters in liveries, and prepared

for examinations by household professors in lecture halls equipped with all kinds of settees, arm-chairs and sofas ; just imagine—but no, my young friends, never mind about this.

The Pilgrim Visits Cathedrals

CATHEDRAL towns are small towns with large cathedrals, in which immoderately long services are held; and the sacristan comes up and enjoins the tourist not to look at the ceiling and the pillars, but to sit down in a pew and listen to what is being sung by the choir. This is the custom of the sacristans in Ely, Lincoln, York and Durham; I do not know what they do elsewhere, as I have not been elsewhere. I heard a huge quantity of litanies, psalms, anthems and hymns, and I perceived that English cathedrals usually have wooden ceilings, in consequence of which the buttress system of continental Gothic has not been developed in them; that the Perpendicular pillars in England have the appearance of complicated water-pipes; that the Protes-

tant sacristans are dourer than the Catholic ones and are just as addicted to tips as the Italian sacristans, except that—being gentlemen—the tips they get must be bigger ; that the Reformation accomplished a very swinish piece of work when it knocked off the heads of statues and removed pictures and other pagan idolatries from the churches. As a result the English cathedrals are bare and strange, as if nobody had been placed in charge of them. And what is worse, in the middle of the chief nave there is an enclosed choir for the parsons, ministrants and the élite of the diocese ; the rest of the people are seated below and see nothing but the more or less carved walls of the choir and the back of the organ ; the chief nave is thus thoroughly spoilt, the whole of the space is cut into two ; never have I seen anything so absurd. But as they are still singing something there in the choir, I must arise and depart.

Ely, Ely, lama sabachtani ! You betrayed me, Ely, dead town, lying at the foot of a

romanesque cathedral, when, tired and thirsty at five o'clock in the afternoon, I knocked at the doors of tea-rooms and taverns, beer-shops, tobacconists and stationers, but it was not opened unto me. At five o'clock in the afternoon Ely is asleep; unhappily I had no time to investigate what Ely does at three o'clock in the afternoon or at ten o'clock in the morning; perhaps it just does nothing else but sleep. So I sat down amid the cow-manure in

the public park and gazed at the venerable cathedral, which stands there for the praise of God. The jackdaws round the towers are perhaps the souls of sacristans who during their lifetime haunted the church. Ely is asleep.

Lincoln runs up a little hill, has a castle and a cathedral, as well as some relic of the Romans—I have forgotten what it is; the cathedral is grey and beautiful, and choral services are held there for three sacristans who watch me with enmity. What can I do? Farewell, sacristans, I am going to have a peep at York.

At York the cathedral is still more beautiful; I wanted to look over it, but the sacristan said I should desist from this, as a service would be held shortly. So I went for a stroll on the ramparts, and from there I made a drawing of York Minster, although they were holding a service in it; perhaps I shall go to the English hell for so doing. Around is the fair region of Yorkshire, a landscape of massive cows and renowned

pigs, the head-quarters of all English hams and bacons; and the streets in York are old and pretty, with projecting gables and black rafters. I could say a great deal about the history of York, but I must go to Durham.

The cathedral at Durham is very ancient,

and towers up from a high rock; inside, they are holding a service with sermon, song and sacristans; nevertheless, I saw the grave of the Venerable Bede, thick-set pillars and cloisters, and a detachment of pretty American girls; the pillars are covered with a deeply engraved fluting which produces a curious, almost polychromatic effect. Besides this, there is also the grave of St. Cuthbert, an old castle and old stone cottages, as well as

a pretty little town running from hill to hill ; but more than this I do not know.

Thus English ecclesiastical architecture is on the whole less picturesque and less plastic than that of the Continent. When the ancient Britons had once contrived to build enormous church naves with a wooden ceiling, they kept to it in Gothic as well, evidently prompted by a primitive conservatism ; and so their churches are large halls with broad windows, without vaultage or groins, without any huge system of buttresses, arches, cornices and the whole of that plastic riot ; and they have two rectangular towers by the gateway and one above the cross-ties, statues flung out by the Reformation and scanty sculptural adornment, the inner space spoilt by the choir and the general impression considerably upset by the presence of sacristans.

But just one word about you, tiny churches without choirs and sacristans, bare and cold ante-rooms of God, with an oaken roof, a grassy graveyard around, and a rectangular belfry among the trees, which is as typical

of the English country-side as the onion-shaped church domes are of ours; belfries which mark the passage of time with an eternally changeless chant over the eternally changeless graves of the departed.

A JOURNEY TO SCOTLAND

Edinburgh

AND now to the north, to the north! County flits after county, in some of which the cows are lying down, in others of which they are standing up; in

some places sheep are grazing, elsewhere horses and elsewhere only crows. Then comes into view the grey sea with rocks and marshes, the quickset hedges cease, and in

place of them small stone walls range along. Small stone walls, stone villages, stone towns ; beyond the river Tweed is the land of stone.

An English friend of mine was almost right when he declared Edinburgh to be the finest city in the world. It is a fine place, stonily grey and strange of aspect. Where in other cities a river flows, there a railway runs ; on one side is the old town, on the other side the new one, with streets wider than anywhere else, every vista showing a statue or a church ; and in the old town the houses are appallingly high, a thing which exists nowhere in England, and the washing is flaunted upon clothes-lines above the streets like the flags of all nations—and this also does not exist down in England ; and there are dirty, red-headed children in the streets—this also does not exist down in England ; and blacksmiths, carpenters and all sorts of fellows, this also does not exist in England ; and strange little streets, wynds or closes, this also does not exist in England ; and fat, dishevelled old women, this also does not exist

in England. Here the people begin to be as in Naples or in Czechoslovakia. What a funny thing it is to see old houses here with chimneys on the gable, apparently instead of towers, as I have shown in my drawing. Such a thing exists nowhere in the world except at Edinburgh. And the city is situated on hills ; you are hurrying along somewhere or other, and all at once beneath your feet you have a deep green chasm with a fine river below ; you are taking a walk and all of a sudden there is another street located on a bridge above your head, as at Genoa ; you are taking a walk, and you reach a perfectly circular open space, as at Paris. The whole time there is something for you to be surprised at. You make your way into the Parliament, and there whole troops of lawyers are rushing about in wigs with two tails behind, just like two hundred years ago. You go to have a look at the castle, which is situated so picturesquely on a vertical rock, and on your way you meet a whole band of pipers and a company of Highlanders ; they

have striped plaid trousers, and caps with ribbons, but the pipers have red and black skirts, and on them leather bags, and on their pipes they play a bleating and exciting song to the accompaniment of a whole band of drummers. The drumsticks are brandished above the heads of the drummers, they

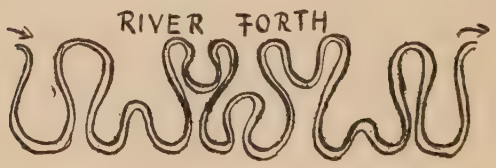
twist and leap up in a strange and savage dance ; and the pipers bleat a war-song and march bare-kneed along the castle esplanade with the tripping step of ballet-girls. And bang, bang, the drumsticks twist more rapidly, are crossed, fly up, and suddenly this turns into a funeral march, the pipers whistle an endless and trailing melody, the

Highlanders stand at attention, behind them the castle of the Scottish kings, and still farther behind them the whole blood-stained and dreadful history of this land. And bang, bang, the drumsticks dance a wild and wise dance overhead—here the music has remained a spectacle as in the earliest times ; and the pipers lift themselves, as if with the impatience of a stallion they were dancing into battle.

Another land and other people. It is a province, but a monumental one ; a poorer land, but a sturdy one ; a russet and angular type of people, but the girls are prettier than down in England ; beautiful and dirty-nosed children, a life ample and jolly in spite of all Calvinism. Upon my soul, I quite took a fancy to it ; and to show how pleased I was I will give you as make-weight a strip of sea near Leith and Newhaven, a cold and steely sea, and blue sea-shells as a keepsake and a greeting from the fishing-smacks ; and on top of that I will add for you the entire old-fashioned and picturesque town of Stirling

with the castle of the Scottish kings. If you stand near the old cannon on the castle rampart, you hold in your hand the key to the Scottish mountains; suppose we went there and had a look at them?

In front of the castle a ballet-girl moves to and fro with a bayonet and a striped kilt; ten paces to the gate, then back, attention, present arms, order arms; the ballet-girl shakes her skirts and dances back again. In the south the battle-field of Robert Bruce, in the north the blue mountains; and below on the green meadow the river Forth twines as no river in the world twines; and I have drawn it so that everybody may see what a beautiful and gratifying river it is.



Loch Tay

IF I were a poet like Karel Toman or Otakar Fischer,[1] I would to-day write a short but beautiful poem. It would be about the Scottish lakes, the Scottish wind would be wafted through it, and the daily Scottish rain would bedew it ; it would contain something about blue waves, gorse, bracken and wistful pathways ; in it I should not mention that these wistful pathways are entirely begirt with a fence (perhaps to prevent enchantresses from going to dance there). I must say in crude prose how beautiful it is here ; a blue and violet-coloured lake between bare hills—the lake is called Loch Tay and each valley is called Glen, each mountain Ben and each man Mac, a blue and peaceful lake, a sparkling

[1] Two distinguished contemporary Czech poets.

waft of wind, shaggy black or reddish oxen on the meadows, pitch-black mountain torrents and hills of ballad-like bareness, over-

grown with grass and furze—how am I to depict this for you? It would, after all, be best to write it in verse; but I cannot think of a rhyme to the word "tempest."

It was this name tempest which yesterday carried me off to the castle of Finlarig. I gave the old castle watchman a dreadful fright, for he was just cleansing a former place of execution and perhaps he took me for a ghost. When he had calmed down he gave an account of the aforesaid place of execution in an odd dialect but with great gusto; it contains a hole through which the amputated heads fell into an underground spot; as for me, I consider it possible that this orifice and the underground chamber served bloodless and natural purposes. An American who was present smiled sceptically at all this as if it were humbug; but the Americans have no proper angle from which to view the mysteries of the Old World. The dear old watchman was remarkably proud of his castle; he pointed out all sorts of trees, old horse-shoes and stones, and explained at inordinate length, apparently in Gaelic, about Queen Mary Stuart, Marquis Ballochbuich and Scottish history. There is also a chamber with statues there; one represents Queen

Mary, one a certain knight named Campbell and one the queen's jester. The latter I have drawn for you.

There is another statue which is very peculiar, and concerning it the old custodian, evidently following the ancient ballads, stated that it represents a shrew; and because she was beyond endurance, the sheriff decided that all those affected should give her a public drubbing, and this is what the statue in question is supposed to represent. I differ from the opinion of the local authority, in so far as the statue seems to me far older than

sheriff, shrew and Castle Finlarig ; I think it represents something very ancient, perhaps the torments of the damned in hell. Anyhow, I made a careful drawing of it.

I succeeded in drawing a Scottish couple, a man with his wife. For the most part the Scots are sturdy, with florid faces and powerful necks ; they have many children and

attractive, ancient clan-names. The skirts of kilts are worn only in the army or when they are playing the bag-pipes. The checkwork plaids are called tartans, and are really a kind of escutcheon ; each clan has a tartan of different colours, and this assuredly was once an adequate reason why mutual massacres took place between clans whose checkwork patterns varied.

The Scottish Sunday is even worse than the English one, and the Scottish religious services evoke the conception of infinity. The pastors wear prickly moustaches, and are neither so rosy nor so bland as the Anglican clergy. Throughout Scotland on Sunday the trains stop running, the railway stations are closed and nothing whatever is done; I am surprised that the very clocks do not stop. Only the wind crinkles the livid and steely lakes between the bare domes of the hills; it was on such a lake that I went sailing until my boat landed on a sand-bank, so I laid aside my pen and went wandering along the wistful pathways between the wire fences.

And there was displayed to me another Scotland beneath grey skies; bare and straggling glens with ruined stone huts, stone walls ranging along the hill-sides, for miles and miles scarcely a single stone cottage, and even that seemingly uninhabited, here and there fields of oats with a finger-high crop—all the rest only bracken and stones and tough grass

like moss; sometimes a sheep without a shepherd will bleat as it crawls over the slope; sometimes a bird will utter a cry of lament; below, among gnarled oaks roars the black river Dochart foaming into a tinge of yellow. A strange, hard, almost prehistoric land. Clouds trail across the hill-tops, a rainy veil shadows the mournful and empty region, which has not yet yielded itself to the hand of man, and below over the black stones roars the black river Dochart.

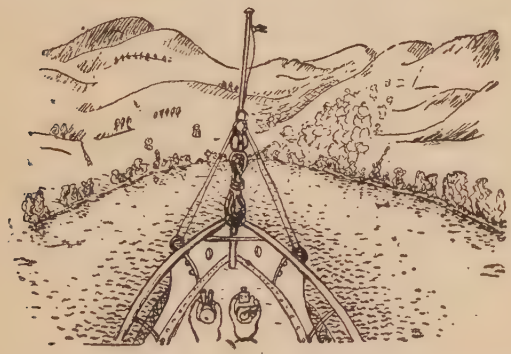
"*Binnorie, O Binnorie*"

BEAR me, O *Lake Queen*, along the keen grey and blue surface of Loch Tay, between the unfrequented domes of the hills beneath skies which regale me with rain and sun; bear me, trim vessel, along the glistening silk of Lake Tay.

Bear me, red post-chaise, through the greenest of green valleys, through a valley of gnarled trees, through a valley with a foaming river, through a valley of shaggy sheep, through a glen of Nordic abundance. Wait, silvery aspen, move not, wavy oak-tree standing astraddle, black pine-thicket and lush alder; wait, wild-eyed maiden.

But no; bear me, hissing train, northward, northward, among those dark mountains. Blue and dark mountains above green domes; valleys of russet cows, light and dark green,

glistening lakelets and Nordic beauty of birch-trees ; endless the bare and trim roundness of hills and valleys, wooded glens and slopes russet with heather, northern beauty of meadows, birch-coppices in the north, in



the north the surface of the sea gleams like a steel layer.

Inverness, a small town containing trout and Highlanders, is built entirely of pink granite. And the cottages are fashioned of such beautifully hewn ashlars that I have drawn them for you. And the eaves above the doorways are to be found only in Inverness.

And now to the mountains, to the interior of the country, to the region of the Gaelic language. Heavens above! never have I seen such a forlorn and sinister region; still the bare hills, but higher and direr; nothing but stunted birch-trees, and then not even those, but yellow gorse and heather, and then

not even that, but oozing black peat, and on it only wisps of bog-cotton, which we call St. Ivan's beard, and then not even that, but stones, stones, sheer stones with tough reed-stems.

Clouds drag their way across the grey baldness of the hills, there is a spatter of cold rain, mists rise above the black rocks, and a

dark glen is revealed, mournful as the howling of a dog. For miles and miles neither dwelling nor man; and when a cottage does fly past it is as grey and stony as the rocks, and all by itself, nothing else for miles around. A lake without a fisherman, streams without

a miller, pastures without a shepherd, road without a wayfarer. Only in the more fertile valleys graze the shaggy Scottish steers; they stand in the rain and lie down in the damp; perhaps that is why they are so overgrown with prickly tufts, as I have drawn them for you.

And the Scottish sheep have whole Have-

locks of wool, and black masks on their faces ; nobody tends them, only a small stone wall along the bare slopes indicates the presence of man ; as far as this wall is my pasture.

And now the place is so deserted that there is neither flock nor property, only a ruined cottage and a tumbledown mound on the

brown undulation of the mossy slope. The end of life, here nothing has changed for at least ten thousand years ; people have only made roads and built railways, but the earth has not changed ; nowhere a tree or a shrub ; only cold lakes, whins and ferns, unending brown gorse-land, endless black stones, ink-tinted mountain summits slit by silvery threads of torrents, black marshes of peat,

cloudily smoking glens between the bald ridges of mountain-tops, and again a lake with dark reeds, its surface without birds, a region without people, disquiet without cause, a road without a goal, I do not know what I am seeking, but this anyhow is solitude; drink your fill of this unbounded sadness, before you return to the haunts of men, batten on solitude, unappeased soul; for you have seen nothing greater than this desolation.

And now I am driven along into the valley; by the roadside yellow sparks of gorse gush forth, dwarf pines crouch, stunted birch-trees have clutched at granite rubble; a black torrent leaps through the valley, here are now the pine-woods, the purple bloom of rhododendra and crimson digitalis; birch-trees, sumach, oaks and alders, Nordic wildness, ferns waist-high, and a dense forest of junipers; the sun pierces the clouds, and below glistens the deep strip of a new sea among the mountain peaks.

Terra Hyperborea

I AM in the region known as Skye, in the Hebrides, on a large queer island among islands, on an island consisting of fjords, peat, rocks and summits ; I collect coloured shells among bluish or sallow pebbles, and by a special favour of heaven I find even the excrement of the wild salmon which is the milch cow of the Gaelic water-nymphs. The slopes ooze like a drenched sponge, the heather bruach catches in my feet, but then, readers, can be seen the islands of Raasay and Scalpay, Rum and Eigg, and then can be seen the mountains with strange and ancient names, such as Beinn na-Cailich and Sgurr na-Banachdich and Leacan Nighean an-i-Siosalaich, or Druim nan Cleochd, while those bald domes yonder are called merely Blaven, quite simply Blaven. And this rivu-

let here is simply Aan Reidhe Mhoire and that sandy inlet is merely Sran Ard-a-Mhullaich. These and all the other names demonstrate the beauty and strangeness of the Isle of Skye.

It is beautiful and poverty-stricken ; and the native huts have such a prehistoric look,

that they might have been built by the late Picts, concerning whom, as is known, there is nothing known. Then the Caledonian Gaels came here, and the Vikings from somewhere in Norway ; King Hakon actually left behind him a stone stronghold, and the place is therefore called Kyle Akin. Apart from this, all these dwellers left the Isle of Skye in its original state, as it proceeded from

God's hand : wild, forlorn and rugged, damp and sublime, terrible and winsome. Stone cottages are being overgrown with grass and moss, or are falling into decay, deserted by men.

Once a week the sun shines, and then the mountain peaks are revealed in all the inexpressible tints of blue ; and there is blueness which is azure, mother-of-pearl, foggy or indigo, clouded like vapours, a hint or mere reminder of something beautifully blue. All these, and countless other shades of blueness I saw on the blue summits of Cuilin, but there, added to everything else, can be seen the blue sky and the blue bay, and this simply cannot be narrated ; I tell you, unknown and divine virtues arose within me at the sight of this unbounded blueness.

But then the clouds creep forth from the valley and mountains, the sea turns grey, and a chill rain flows from the drenching slopes. In the home of some worthy folk the peat is burning on the hearth, a lady with a Greek profile sings Scottish ballads,

and with the others I sing a strange and ancient song :

> " tha tighin fodham, fodham, fodham,
> tha tighin fodham, fodham, fodham,
> tha tighin fodham, fodham, fodham,
> tha tighan fodham eirig."

And then we all hold hands in a circle and sing something Scottish about parting or meeting again. Between the promontories of the island can be seen a narrow strip of open sea ; thither, I am told, the whalers sail to Iceland or Greenland. Man, why do you feel sad when you look at that

streak of open sea? Be greeted, O lands, which perchance I shall never see!

Ah, I have beheld blue and fiery seas and pliant beeches and palm-trees bending over azure waves; but these grey and cold lochs fairly bewitched me; look, yonder a crane is wading among the seaweed, and a gull or a sea-swallow is gliding over the waves with a wild and piercing cry; above the moorland a snipe is whistling and a flock of fieldfares are snorting, a shaggy little steer gazes at man, and on the bald hills the sheep are grazing, similar, from afar, to yellowish lice; and at evening myriads of tiny flies swarm forth and crawl into man's nose, while the northern day lasts till nearly midnight.

And the livid, plashing sea beneath one's feet, and the open road to the north. . . .

" But I am Annie of Lochroyan "

BUT the captain of the steamer did not allow himself to be lured by the open road northward; he was a wary fellow, and instead of making for Greenland

or Iceland he simply sailed to Mallaig; evidently he had not read Jack London.

Why do you pursue us, sea-gulls, screaming

boon-companions of ocean? If I could fly like you, I would soar across the sea to Hamburg; there is the river Elbe, and above it I would soar on strong wings; then near the town of Mělník I would make my way along another river, until I ended my flight at Prague; and I would soar through the triumphal arches of the bridges, screaming

and chuckling with joy. People, I have flown here straight from Scotland, to warm my white belly on the mild Vltava. Beautiful and strange is the land, known also as Caledonia, or the land of Stevenson; but it is somehow mournful and gloomy. Here, it is true, you have no lakes, but, on the other hand, you have Vaclavské náměstí; and, although you have no Ladhar Bheinn here,

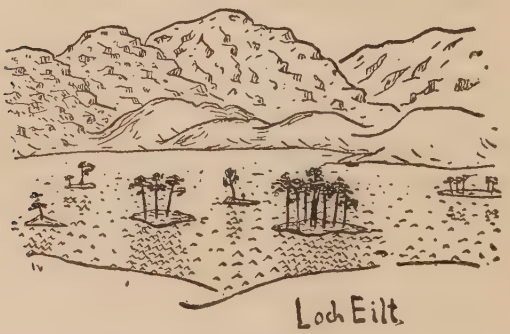
you have the embankment by the river and the acacias and Vyšehrad and the Petřín hill; and I am to bring you greetings from a pilgrim who is just sailing through Sleat Sound.

I have drawn for you this Sleat Sound with

Ben Ladhar; I have drawn for you also the harbour of Mallaig, and I have included one mariner, so that nobody can say I have suppressed anything or not drawn the world as it is, with barques and soldiers.

Bear me, O train, through all the regions of Caledonia; for my heart feels happy and mournful here. And there is the lake Morar

and Loch Shiel ; and there are the mountain peaks, the hill-sides and the glens, broad-shouldered summits dotted with rocks like a pudding with plums, pointed lakes with delicate islets, such as Loch Eilt, and lakes wherever there is any chance for them to be,



long and glistening strips of water, surfaces ruffled by the wind with silvery paths of the water sprites : mountains which are rocky or ovally swollen up from a granite dough, summits striped, furrowed, bare as a hippopotamus, blue and russet and green, and the whole way along, forlorn mountains, unending and unpeopled.

At last, Fort William, one of the iron bolts which once held back the rebellious moun-

taineers ; and above it Ben Nevis, the highest peak in this land of mountains, a thick-set

and sullen fellow above an ocean fjord, interwoven with white cataracts from the snowfields yonder on the top—and still more

mountains and mountains, glens and lakes, valleys of shadows, bursts of black waters, the earth which God kneaded from a hard material and handed over to man that upon it he might fight with his fellow-man ; for there can be no tussling with rocks and gorseland.

And this short postscript deals with you, O Glasgow, city without beauty, city of noise and commerce, city of factories and wharves, harbour for wares of all kinds. What am I to say about you ? Is there then any beauty in factories, docks and warehouses, cranes in the harbour, towers of steel-works, flocks of gasometers, clattering cartloads of goods, tall chimneys and thunderous steam-hammers, structures of girders and iron, buoys in the water and mountains of coal ? I, miserable sinner, think and see that all these things are very beautiful and picturesque and monumental ; but the life which is born from this is neither beautiful nor picturesque, but it is deserted by the breath of God, crude and

grimy and sticky, noisy, reeking and oppressive, disorderly and burdensome, more burdensome than hunger and more disorderly than squalor; and there sank upon me the weariness of myriads, and I fled, O Glasgow, for I had no courage to behold and compare.

NORTH WALES

North Wales

HOLY Writ declares quite plainly: "Ac efe a ddywededd hefyd wrth y bobleedd. Pan welech gwmmwl yn cedi e'r gerllewin, yn y fan y dywedwch. Y mae cawed yn dyfodd; ac felly y mae" (Luke xiii. 54). Now, although the Welsh Bible says this about the west wind, it was in a west wind that I proceeded to Mount Snowdon or, more correctly, Eryri Y Wyddfa, in order that I might see the whole of the land of Wales. Ac felly y mae: it not only rained, but I found myself amid clouds and in such cold that on the summit of Snowdon I turned aside to a stove; for a fire is very beautiful to look upon, and by the glowing coals it is possible to think of a whole lot of the nicest things. The guide-book praises the beauty and diversity of the view from

Mount Snowdon: I saw white and grey clouds, I even felt them beneath my shirt. It is not exactly ugly to look at, because it is white, but it is not exceedingly varied. Nevertheless, it was vouchsafed to me to behold Lliwedd and Moel Offrwn and Cwm-y-Llan and Llyn Ffynnon Gwas and Crib-y-

The * * Splendid View from the Top of Snowdon

ddysgyl; and tell me, are these beautiful names not worth a little fogginess, tempest, cold and cloud?

As regards the language of the Welsh, it is rather unintelligible, and, as my learned friend explained to me, also complicated; for example, the word for father is sometimes "dad," sometimes "tad" and sometimes

" mhad," according to circumstances. That it is a complicated language is evident from the fact that one village near Anglesea is known as Llanfairpwllgwyngyllgerychwyrndrobwllllantysiliegegegech. I may tell you that the Celtic tongue of Wales is pleasant to listen to, especially from the lips of the

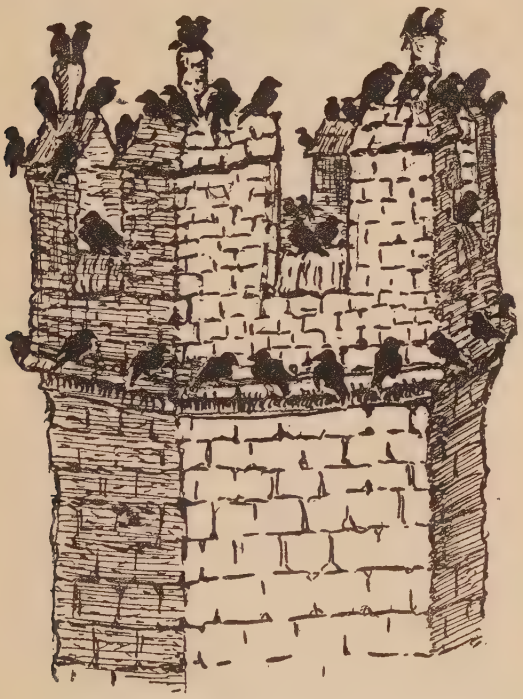
dark-haired girls of an almost French type. The old Welsh women, however, unfortunately wear men's caps; this is evidently a remnant of the native costume which included, for the women, a man's top-hat of enormous height.

In other respects Wales is by no means so strange and terrible as its place-names. One place is called Penmaenmawr, and the

only things there are quarries and the seaside. I do not know why some names produce a magical effect on me ; I had to have a look at Llandudno and I was profoundly depressed ; firstly, it is pronounced otherwise, and then it is only a pile of hotels, rocks and sand, just like any other seaside resort of this island. So I crept down to Carnarvon, the chief town of the Welsh ; it is so far away that the people in the post office there know nothing about our country, and at seven o'clock no evening meal is to be had there. I do not know why I spent two whole days in such a place. There is a very old castle of the princes of Wales there ; I should have drawn it, but I could not get it on to the paper ; so I drew at least one tower of it, where an autonomous parliament of jackdaws was just sitting. Never have I seen and heard so many jackdaws ; I tell you, you really must go to Carnarvon.

Wales is the land of mountains, Lloyd George, trout, excursionists, jackdaws, slate, castles, rain, bards and a Celtic language.

The mountains are bald and violet-coloured, strange and full of stones; in the hotels



there are moist photographs of organizers of singing contests, which are a sort of national speciality; Welsh sheep have long tails, and

if you were to cut me in pieces, that is all I know about North Wales. If anybody thinks this is not much, well, he had better go to Carnarvon. Change at Bangor.

LETTERS ABOUT IRELAND

Letters about Ireland

I

ACTUALLY it had been my wish to write letters from Ireland ; after all, it would take me only a few paltry hours to get there ; why I do not go is not quite clear even to myself. I think that it is the fault of the Irish question.

I have submitted the Irish question to nearly all Englishmen, Scots, Cymri and Gaels whom I have met ; I have asked them what I really ought to see in Ireland and what I should aim at there ; it seemed to me that this question was somehow unpleasant to them. They told me that I would do better to go to Oxford or Stratford or to the seaside. And this inflamed my curiosity all the more.

" Go to the north," one man advised me.

" Go to the west," another one advised me in a somewhat unenthusiastic manner.

" Go to the south," said a third. " I haven't been there myself, but as you want to go there . . ."

II

Question : I should like to have a look at Ireland. What is your opinion ?

Answer : Ah—eh—eh—eh—oh—oh. Eh ?

Question : What ?

Answer : It isn't altogether quiet there.

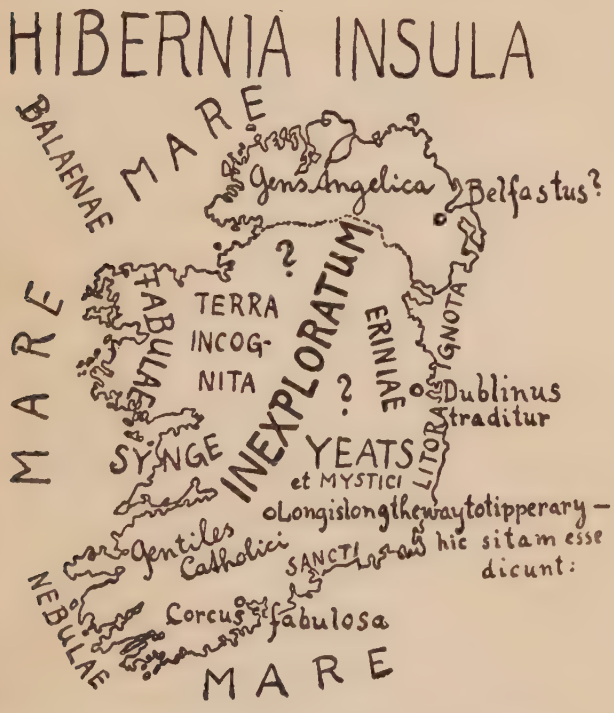
Question : Are things as bad as that ?

Answer : Well, they're blowing up bridges there, and when a train comes along——

Question : Then all the trains are blown up too——?

Answer (rather hesitant) : No, not all of them. I'll tell you what. Go to Belfast. You'll find things there almost the same as here.

Mr. Shaw then recommended only a single spot in Ireland; this is a small islet in the



south, the name of which I have forgotten. The people there, it appears, have preserved

much of their primitive character; unfortunately, added Mr. Shaw, it is impossible to land on the island in question.

IV

Good, you'll have a look round there on your own. You'll buy a guide-book to Ireland, you'll select a few nice places and you'll write letters from Ireland.

Beginning with Glasgow, I wander from one bookshop to another to buy a guide-book to Ireland. But the bookseller shakes his head pensively; no, he hasn't a guide-book to Ireland. He had guide-books to Cornwall and the Dukeries, to Snowdon and the Wembley Exhibition, but as it happens, nothing for Ireland, sorry, nothing whatever. "Our people don't go there."

V

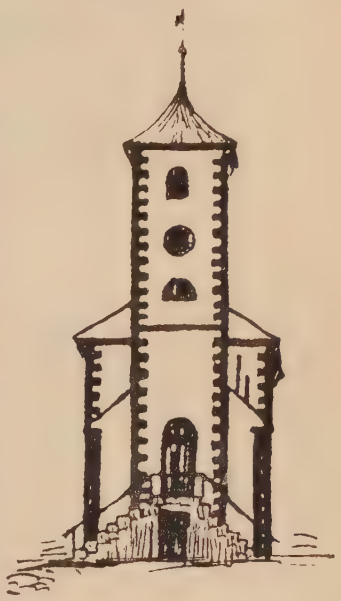
It would take me only a few paltry hours to get from here to Ireland; but tell me, what earthly reason is there why I should

cast aside the secret with which this country, as far as I am concerned, is enfolded? So I shall always gaze with affection and joy at the map of Ireland: Behold, the country, which I did not strip of its veils.

BACK IN ENGLAND

The Lake District

IN order that it may not be said that there are lakes only in Scotland, they have a whole district in England allotted to them ; Derwentwater is there, and Lake Bassenthwaite, Wastwater and Thirlemere and Grasmere and Windermere and Ulleswater and many others ; it was here that the Lake Poets lived, and Wordsworth's grave is at Grasmere beside a nice old church with



an oak roof in a valley of wavy trees ; but, although this sentence is so long, it does not contain all the delights of the pleasant Lake District. Thus, for example, Keswick is a town which differs from all other towns in the world by being built of entirely green

bricks ; but as I have no green paint here, I have drawn for you at least the town hall, which is likewise pretty. For tourist reasons here is Skiddaw and then, between thickets and parks, the delightful Lake Windermere, which I drew on an evening so sweet and peaceful that I felt uneasy with happiness ; the sunset was combing the curly wavelets

with a golden comb, and here the pilgrim sat by the quiet reeds and had no desire to go home again, so dazing and peaceful was the water. The *Guide to the Lake District* mentions the various mountains, passes, and beautiful views, as well as the stone upon which Wordsworth used to sit; and other

local beauty-spots. As regards myself, I discovered and performed a few pilgrimages:

1. The Pilgrimage to the Sheep. There are sheep in every part of England, but the Lake Sheep are specially curly; they graze on silken lawns, and remind one of the souls of the blessed in heaven. Nobody watches them, and they spend their time in feeding, sleeping, and divine ponderings. I have

drawn them, imbuing them with as much calm and tender joy of life as can be achieved by means of a fountain pen.

2. The Pilgrimage to the Cows. The Lake Cows differ from others by reason of their special reddish tinge; besides this they are distinguished from other cows by the

charm of the landscape in which they graze, and by their mildness of expression. They walk about in the Elysian Fields the whole day long; and when they lie down they slowly and solemnly ruminate words of thanksgiving. In my picture I have surrounded them with all the beauties of the Lake District; you see there a bridge be-

neath which flows a small river with trout, soft shrubs, wavy trees, oval and pleasant hills covered with copses and quickset hedges, the ridges of the Cumbrian mountains, and finally a sky full of moisture and light; amongst the trees you perceive the tops of cottages built of reddish or greenish stone,

and you will admit that to be a cow in the Lake District is a great favour which falls to the lot only of the most sacred and worthy among all creatures.

3. The Pilgrimage to the Horses. Horses in England do nothing else but graze all day or walk about on beautiful grass. Perhaps they are not horses at all, but Swift's Houyhnhnms, a wise and semi-divine race which

does not engage in trade, takes no part in politics, and is not even interested in the horse-racing at Ascot. They regard man indulgently and almost without antagonism; they are remarkably intelligent. Sometimes they meditate, sometimes they rush about with flying tails, and sometimes they gaze in

so majestic and solemn a manner, that man beside them feels himself to be a sort of ape. To draw a horse is the most difficult task which has hitherto come my way. When I made an attempt at it, the horses surrounded me, and one of them with might and main tried to eat up my sketch-book; I had to beat a retreat, when he refused to be satisfied with my showing him my pictures from afar.

There are many other beautiful things in the Lake District, thus, in particular, the winding rivers, the bushy and magnificent trees, the paths twining like ribbons, the call of the mountains and the tranquillity of the valleys, the crinkled and peaceful lake ; and along these twining paths pant chars-à-bancs full of tourists, motor-cars fly, and women slip on bicycles ; only the Sheep, the Cows and the Horses ruminate deliberately and without haste on the beauties of nature.

Dartmoor

WELL, I have seen everything; I have seen the mountains and lakes, the sea, the pastures and regions like gardens; the only thing I have not seen is a proper English forest, for here, if I may put it so, they have no forest because of the very trees. So off I went to the spot marked on the map as "Dartmoor Forest"; moreover, unless I am wrong in my literary history, Dartmoor is the scene of the hound of the Baskervilles. On the way I had a look at the place whence Hispaniola sailed for Stevenson's Treasure Island; it is at Bristol, most likely by that landing-stage where stood the brig which smelt of oranges. Beyond this there is nothing at Bristol except a fine church, where some sort of praying was just going on, a cathedral where devotions

were also just being held with song and preaching, and finally an old hospital, where I drew a bearded caryatid, a chimera with a beard, which was quite an interesting thing for Bristol.

At Exeter I was beset by an English Sunday coupled with rain. An Exeter Sunday is so thorough and holy that the very churches are closed, and as regards creature comforts, the wayfarer who despises cold potatoes must go to bed with an empty stomach; I do not know what particular joy this causes to the Exeter God. In other respects it is a nice town with pleasant and quiet rain, and old English houses, to which I shall return on another occasion; for now I am hurrying to Dartmoor Forest.

The journey there is along prettily winding roads across curved hills through that shaggiest of green regions, which contains the

densest of quickset hedges, the biggest of sheep, the greatest quantities of ivy, coppices and hawthorn, as well as the bushiest trees and cottages covered with the thickest thatches that I have ever seen. An old tree in Devonshire is as compact as a rock and as perfect

as a statue. Then come straggling, bare, forlorn hills without a single tree; this is Dartmoor. Here and there projects on the solitude of furze a granite boulder upraised like the altar of giants or primeval lizards; these are tors, I may tell you. Sometimes among the furze there flows a black streamlet,

a sunken pool darkens, an overgrown swamp glistens ; they say that a rider on horseback will vanish there without a trace, but this I could not try, because I had no horse. The low ridges become overcast ; I do not know whether it is the droop of the straggling clouds, or the fumes from the ceaselessly oozing earth. A misty veil of rain obscures the region of granite and marsh, the clouds ponderously roll together and for a while a baleful twilight reveals the forlorn stretches of furze, juniper and bracken, which just now were an impenetrable wood.

What is there in man that causes him to hold his breath when he sees so uncanny and mournful a region ? Is there something beautiful about it ?

Up hill and down dale, up hill and down dale through green Devon between two walls of quickset hedge which divides the broad acres into squares, as in our country the fragrant field-borders, and all the time among old trees, among the sagacious eyes of the flocks, up hill and down dale to the red shore of Devon.

The Harbours

OF course, I had a look at the harbours, and I saw so many of them that now I mix them up. Well, wait a bit, Folkestone, London, Leith, Glasgow—that's four ; then Liverpool, Bristol, Plymouth, and possibly there are others. The finest one is Plymouth, which is beautifully bored out between rocks and islands, and where they have an old harbour in the Barbican with real sailors, fishermen and black barks, and a new harbour beneath the Hoe promenade with captains, statues and striped lighthouse. I have drawn this lighthouse, but the drawing does not show that the night is pale blue, that the sea is asparkle with the green and red lamps of ships and buoys, that I am sitting beneath the lighthouse with a black cat on my lap—I mean a real cat—that I am stroking the sea, the

kitten, the flashes on the water and the whole world in a fit of frenzied joy at being alive; and below on the Barbican there is a reek of fish and ocean as in the times of old Drake and Captain Marryat, and the sea is quiet,

ample and lustrous—I tell you, the finest harbour is at Plymouth.

But Liverpool, reader, Liverpool is the biggest; and for its size I now pardon it for the harm it did me. Owing to some congress or royal visitor or whatever it was, it would not grant the wayfarer a night's lodging; and it terrified me with a new cathedral, big

and hopeless like the ruins of the baths of Caracallus at Rome. And at midnight it enveloped itself in a Puritanic darkness to prevent me from finding my way to a wretched inn, which gave me a bed as damp and sour-smelling as a tub of cabbage—well, as I say, I forgive Liverpool all this, for

there was something worth seeing from Dingle to Bootle and still further to Birkenhead on the other side—yellow water, puffing steam ferries, tug-boats, like pot-bellied, black hogs rocking on the waves, white Atlantic liners, docks, basins, towers, cranes, silos, elevators, smoking factories, stevedores, barks, warehouses, wharves, casks, packing-cases, tubs, bales, chimneys, masts, rigging,

trains, smoke, chaos, yelling, clanging, clattering, panting, rent bellies of ships, smell of horses, of sweat, of foul water and garbage from all parts of the earth ; and if I were to go on heaping up words for another half hour I should not prove a match for that sum-total of quantity, confusion and extent which is called Liverpool. Beautiful is the steamer when with a screech it scatters the water with its broad breast, hurling smoke from its stout funnels ; it is beautiful when it vanishes beyond the arched shoulder of the waters, dragging a veil of smoke behind it. Beautiful is the distance and the goal, O man, you who stand on the bow as you depart. Beautiful is the sailing-boat which glides over the waves, beautiful is departure and arrival. My sealess country, is not your horizon somewhat narrow, and do you not lack the murmur of distant places ? Yes, yes, but there can be the bustle of expanses around our heads ; even if we cannot navigate, we can at least indulge in thought, furrow on wings of the spirit the broad and

high world ; I tell you, there is still room enough for expeditions and for big ships. Yes, it is needful to keep on sailing forth ; the ocean is in all places where courage is.

But, steersman, I beg of you, do not turn back ; we are not yet sailing home. Let us linger here in this roadstead of Liverpool and look at everything before we return ; it is vast, dirty and noisy. Where is the real England, I wonder ? There in those quiet and clean cottages amid the fearfully ancient trees and traditions, in the homes of people who are in the pitch of perfection, peaceable and refined, or here on these turbid waves, in the clattering docks, in Manchester, Poplar, Glasgow's Broomielaw ? Well, I must confess that I do not understand this ; there in that England almost too much perfection and beauty ; and here, here almost too much. . .

Well, I do not understand it ; it is not like the same country and the same people. So be it, let us sail forth ; let the ocean splash me, let the wind buffet me ; I think that I have seen too much.

"Merry Old England"

ONCE again, however, we must come to a standstill; we must just look to see where merry old England really is. Old England, that is, let us say, Stratford, and that is Chester and I know not what else. Stratford, Stratford, let's see, have I been there? No, I haven't; so I haven't seen the house in which Shakespeare was born, if we do not take into account that it has been entirely rebuilt and that, moreover, perhaps no such person as Shakespeare ever existed. But, on the other hand, I have been in Salisbury, where a quite undoubted Massinger worked, and in the Temple in London, where a well-attested Dickens stayed, and at Grasmere, where a historically authenticated Wordsworth lived, and in many other birthplaces and centres of activity which are

undeniably vouched for by documentary evidence. Good, I have found here and there, that good old England, which outwardly has survived in the form of black rafters and carved frontages, as a result of which it has a pretty black and white criss-cross pattern. I should be reluctant to indulge in too venturesome hypotheses, but it

seems to me that the black and white stripes on the sleeves of English policemen have their origin precisely in that criss-cross style of old English houses, as shown in the drawing.

England, it should be explained, is a country of historical traditions ; and everything that is, has some cause, as was taught by John Locke, if I remember rightly. In some towns, as, for example Chester, the

policemen wear white cloaks like surgeons or barbers ; possibly that is a tradition from the time of the Romans. Besides this, old England was fond of all kinds of projecting storeys and gables, so that a house of that sort grows broader and broader towards the top ; in addition to all that, the windows are commonly thrust forward like half-opened

drawers, so that a house of that sort with its storeys, bow-windows, dormers and oriels looks like a large toy with detachable parts, or an old escritoire with drawers, which is perhaps closed up and locked for the night, and there it is. At Chester, moreover, they have something known as " rows." This consists of an arbour, but on the first floor, and from the street, it is reached by means

of stairs, the shops being below and above ; this exists nowhere else in the world. At Chester, too, they have also a cathedral of pink stone, while at York the cathedral is brown, at Salisbury pike-blue, and at Exeter black and green. Nearly all English cathedrals have pillars in the form of water-pipes, a rectangular presbytery, a horrible organ in the middle of the chief nave, and fan-like ribs on the vaulting ; what the Puritans did not destroy was added by the blessed Wyatt with his renovations which are unmixed in style. For instance, Salisbury Cathedral is so hopelessly perfect that it makes you feel uneasy : and you circumambulate the town of Salisbury three times as Achilles did at Troy, and then, discovering that you still have two hours to spare before the train starts, you sit down on a bench in the town amid three one-legged old men and watch the local constable puffing out his cheeks to make a baby laugh in its pram. Altogether, nothing is more dreadful than rain in a small town.

At Salisbury they have also walls of houses covered with roof-tiles ; I have drawn them to delight the tiler whose hands this paper may reach.

In the northern counties they have built cottages of nice grey stone ; that is the reason

why in London nearly all the houses are built of ugly grey bricks. In Berkshire and Hampshire they have carried out building operations wholesale with paprika-red bricks ; that is why in London also there are whole streets of red bricks, as if the angel of death had smeared them with blood. At Bristol

some builder or other produced thousands of windows with queer arches slightly Moorish in character, and at Tavistock all the cottages have an entrance-door like that of Princetown prison. I fear that I have now exhausted the architectural diversity of England.

The most beautiful things in England, however, are the trees, the herds, and the people ; and then, too, the ships. But old England comprises those rosy old gentlemen who in the spring-time wear grey top-hats, and in the summer chase tiny balls over golf-courses, and they look so fresh and nice that I should like to play with them if I were eight years old ; and the old ladies who always have some knitting in their hands and are rosy, nice-looking and kind, drink hot water and never tell you about their ailments.

On the whole, a country which has contrived to produce the finest childhood and the finest old age certainly possesses something of the best there is in this vale of tears.

The Pilgrim Observes the People

IN England I should like to be a cow or a baby; but being a grown-up man I viewed the people of this country. Well, it is not true that the English wear loud check suits, with pipe and whiskers; as regards the latter, the only true Englishman is Dr. Bouček in Prague. Every Englishman wears a mackintosh, and has a cap on his head and a newspaper in his hand. As for the Englishwoman, she carries a mackintosh or a tennis racket. Nature here has a propensity for unusual shagginess, excrescences, woolliness, spikiness, and all kinds of hair; English horses, for example, have regular tufts and tassels of hair on their legs, and English dogs are nothing more nor less than absurd bundles of forelocks. Only the English lawn and the English gentleman are shaved every day.

What an English gentleman is cannot be stated concisely; you would have to be acquainted, firstly, with an English club-waiter, or with a booking-clerk at a railway station, or, above all, with a policeman. A gentleman, that is a measured combination of silence, courtesy, dignity, sport, newspapers

and honesty. The man sitting opposite you in the train will anger you for two hours by not regarding you as worthy of a glance; suddenly he gets up and hands you your bag which you are unable to reach. Here the people always manage to help each other, but they never have anything to say to each other, except about the weather. That is

probably why Englishmen have invented all games, and why they do not speak during their games. Their taciturnity is such that they do not even publicly abuse the Government, the trains or the taxes ; on the whole, a joyless and reticent people. In the place of taverns, where one can sit, drink and talk, they have invented bars, where one can stand, drink and hold one's peace. The more talkative people (like Lloyd George) take to politics, or to authorship ; an English book must have at least four hundred pages.

It is perhaps through sheer taciturnity that the English swallow half of every word, and then the second half they somehow squash ; so it is difficult to understand them. I used to travel every day to Ladbroke Grove ; the conductor would come and I would say : "Ledbruk Grröv." "...?? Eh?" "Ledbhuk Ghöv!" "...??? Eh?" "Hevhuv Hev!" "Aa, Hevhuv Hov!" The conductor would rejoice and give me a ticket to Ladbroke Grove. I shall never learn this as long as I live.

But if you get to know them closer, they are very kind and gentle ; they never speak much because they never speak about themselves. They enjoy themselves like children, but with the most solemn leathery expression ; they have lots of ingrained etiquette, but at the same time they are as free-and-easy as young whelps. They are hard as flint, incapable of adapting themselves, conservative, loyal, rather shallow and always uncommunicative ; they cannot get out of their skin, but it is a solid and, in every respect, excellent skin. You cannot speak to them without being invited to lunch or dinner ; they are as hospitable as St. Julian, but they can never overstep the distance between man and man. Sometimes you have a sense of uneasiness at feeling so solitary in the midst of these kind and courteous people ; but if you were a little boy, you would know that you can trust them more than yourself, and you would be free and respected here more than anywhere else in the world ; the policeman would puff out his cheeks to make you laugh,

an old gentleman would play at ball with you, and a white-haired lady would lay aside her four-hundred-page novel to gaze at you winsomely with her grey and still youthful eyes.

A Few Faces

BUT now I have a few faces which I must exhibit and describe.

Here is Mr. Seton Watson, or Scotus Viator. You all know him, for he fought in our cause like the archangel Gabriel. He has a house in the Isle of Skye, is writing the history of the Serbs, and in the evening plays the pianola by a blazing peat fire. He has a tall and beautiful wife, two waterproof sons and a blue-eyed baby, windows looking out on to the sea and the islands, a child-like mouth and rooms full of ancestors and pictures from the Czech lands: a refined

and hesitant man of a more subtle countenance than you would expect from this severe and righteous Scottish pilgrim.

This is Mr. Nigel Playfair, a man of the theatre; he is the gentleman who brought my plays to England; but he does even

better things than that; he is placid, artistic, enterprising, and one of the few really modern producers in England.

This is Mr. John Galsworthy, firstly as a dramatist, and secondly as a novelist, for, mark you, it is your duty to make his acquaintance in both these capacities. He is a very tranquil, refined and perfect man, with the

face of a priest or a judge, slender and sinewy, made up of tact, reserve and reflective shyness, exceedingly serious ; only round his eyes there is a smile in the kindly wrinkles with the intentness of their foldings. He has a wife who is very similar to him, and his

books are the perfect and wise works of a sensitive and somewhat sad observer.

This is Mr. G. K. Chesterton ; I have drawn him flying, partly because I was able to have only a rather fugitive impression of him, and then because of his celestial exuberance. Unhappily at that particular moment he was perhaps a trifle subdued by a situation

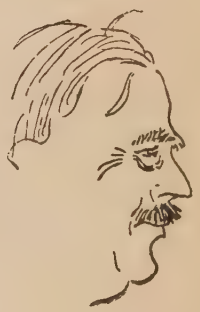
of a slightly official character ; all he could do was to smile, but his smile is enough for three. If I could write about his books, his poetical democracy, his genial optimism, it would be the merriest of my letters ; but as I have taken it into my head to write only

about what I have seen with my own eyes, I will describe to you a capacious gentleman, whose ample structure recalls Viktor Dyk ;[1] he has a musketeer moustache and modest, shrewd eyes beneath pince-nez, hands which are embraces, as the hands of stout people

[1] A well-known Czech writer.

are wont to be, and a flowing necktie. He is at once a child, a giant, a curly-haired lamb and an aurochs. He has a large, russet head, a reflective and whimsical expression, and at first sight he aroused in me bashfulness and a strong feeling of attachment: I did not see him many times.

And this is Mr. H. G. Wells, firstly as he

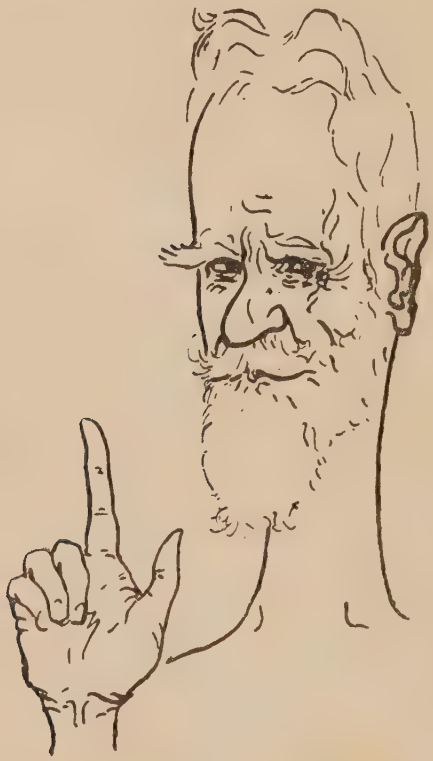


appears in company, and secondly as he appears at home; a massive head, strong, ample shoulders, strong and warm hands; he resembles a farmer, a worker, a father and everything in the world. He has the thin and clouded voice of a man who is no orator,

a face inscribed with thought and labour, a harmonious home, a pretty, petite wife as active as a linnet, two tall playful sons, eyes as if half-closed and veiled beneath the thick English brows. Unassuming and wise, healthy, strong, very well-informed and very matter-of-fact in all the good and vital implications of this phrase. You forget that you are talking to a great author, because you are talking to a thoughtful and all-round man. Long may you flourish, Mr. Wells.

This is an almost supernatural personality, Mr. Bernard Shaw; I could not make a better drawing of him, because he keeps moving about and talking. He is immensely tall, thin and straight; he looks half like God and half like a very malicious satyr, who, however, by a process of sublimation extending over thousands of years, has lost all that is too closely akin to nature. He has white

hair, a white beard and a very rosy skin, inhumanly clear eyes, a prominent and pug-



nacious nose, something about him of Don Quixote, something apostolic, and something

that makes fun of everything in the world, including himself. Never in my life have I seen so unusual a being; to tell the truth I was afraid of him. I thought it was some spirit who was only pretending to be the famous Bernard Shaw. He is a vegetarian, I do not know whether on principle or from *gourmandise*; one never knows whether people have principles on principle or for their personal gratification. He has a pensive wife, a soft-toned harpsichord, and windows looking on to the Thames; he sparkles with life and has heaps of interesting things to say about himself, about Strindberg, about Rodin, and other famous things; to listen to him is a delight coupled with awe.

I should like to draw many more remarkable and fine heads which I met; they included men, women, and pretty girls, writers, journalists, students, Indians, savants, clubmen, Americans, and all that there is in the world; but now I must take my leave, friends; I am unwilling to believe that I have seen you for the last time.

Escape

TO end up, I shall betray terrible things; for instance, the English Sunday is awful. People say that the use of Sunday is to enable them to go into the country; this is not true; people go into the country to protect themselves in a wild panic from the English Sunday. On Saturday every Briton is assailed by the blind instinct to escape somewhere, just as an animal flees in a blind instinct from an approaching earthquake. Those unable to flee away, at least seek refuge in church, there to tide over the day of horror in prayers and song. This is the day when nobody cooks, nobody travels, nobody gazes, and nobody thinks. I do not know for what unutterable guilt the Lord has condemned England to the weekly punishment of Sunday.

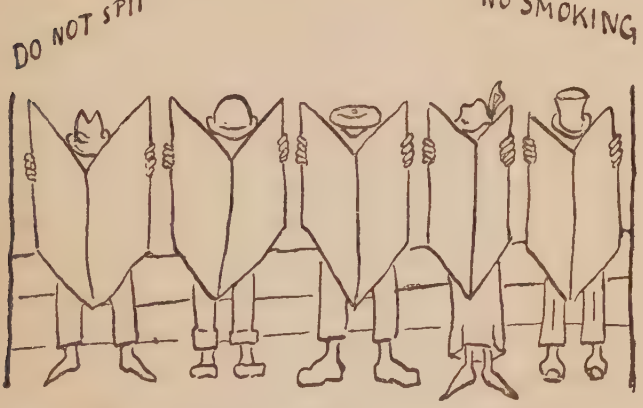
English cooking is of two kinds : good and average. Good English cooking is simply French cooking ; the average cooking in the average hotel for the average Englishman explains to a large extent the English bleakness and taciturnity. Nobody can beam and warble while chewing pressed beef smeared with diabolical mustard. Nobody can exult aloud while unglueing from his teeth a quivering tapioca pudding. A man becomes terribly serious if he is given salmon bedaubed with pink dextrin ; and if for breakfast, for lunch and for supper he has something which, when alive, is a fish, and in the melancholy condition of edibility is called fried sole ; if three times a day he has soaked his stomach with a black brew of tea, and if he has drunk his fill of bleak light beer, if he has partaken of universal sauces, preserved vegetables, custard and mutton—well, he has perhaps exhausted all the bodily enjoyments of the average Englishman and he begins to comprehend his reticence, solemnity, and austere morals. On the other hand, toast, baked

cheese and fried bacon are certainly the heritage of merry old England. I am convinced that old Shakespeare did not soak himself with tannin, and old Dickens, as long as he lived, did not make merry on preserved beef; as for old John Knox, I am not so sure about it . . .

English cooking lacks a certain lightness and floweriness, *joie de vivre*, melodiousness, and sinful voluptuousness. Indeed, I should say that English life also lacks this. The English street is not voluptuous. Ordinary and average life is not bestrewn with joyful noises, smells and sights. The ordinary day does not sparkle with the amenities of chance, with smiles, with the budding of incidents. You cannot make friends with the street, with people and voices. There is nothing which winks at you in a friendly and affable manner.

Lovers carry on their love-making in the parks heavily, morosely and without a word. Drinkers drink in bars, each by himself. The average man proceeds homeward reading a

newspaper and looking neither to the right nor to the left. At home he has his fireside, his little garden, and the inviolate privacy of his family. Besides that he cultivates sport



and the week-end. More about his life than this I have been unable to ascertain.

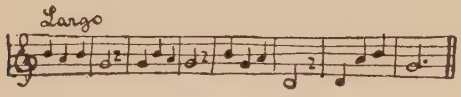
The Continent is noisier, less disciplined, dirtier, madder, subtler, more passionate, more affable, more amorous, fond of enjoyment, wayward, harsh, talkative, more reckless, and somehow less perfect. Please give me a ticket straight away for the Continent.

On Board Ship

WHEN you are on shore, you would like to be on the ship which is just sailing ; when you are on board ship, you would like to be on the shore which is far away. When I was in England, I kept thinking of how nice it is to be home. When I am home, perhaps I shall be thinking of how much finer and better it is to be in England than anywhere else.

I have seen greatness and power, wealth, prosperity, and an incomparably high standard of achievement. Never have I felt sad at the idea that we form only a small and imperfect corner of the world. To be small, unsettled, and uncompleted is a good and valiant mission. There are large and splendid Atlantic liners with three funnels, first-class steamboats which rumble along on the

high seas ; and there are small, unpretentious cargo tramps. Well, friends, it takes quite a lot of pluck to be one of those small and uncomfortable conveyances. But do not say



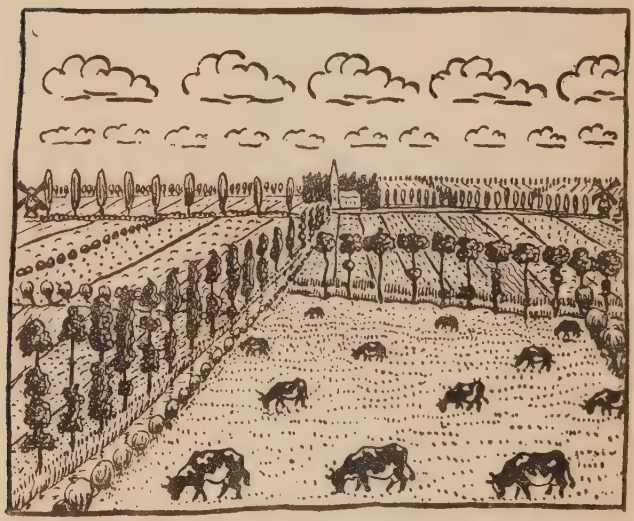
that things in our country are on a small scale ; the universe around us is, thank God, just as great as the universe around the British Empire. A small steamboat will not

hold as much as one of those big ships ; but, my dear sir, it can sail just as far or even elsewhere. That depends on the crew.

My head is still all in a whirl ; for a moment, I feel as if I had just come out of a

huge factory and were deafened by the stillness outside ; and then the next moment it is as if I could hear all the pious chimes of England ringing.

But already in my mind there begin to be



mingled with this the Czech words which I shall hear in a short time. We are a small nation and so each man in it will appear to me as if I knew him personally. The first one I see will be a corpulent and noisy man

with a Virginia cigarette, talkative and wearing his heart on his sleeve. And we shall pass the time of day as if we knew each other.

That low strip on the horizon is already Holland with its windmills, avenues, and

black-and-white cows ; an even and pleasant country, homely, cordial and cosy.

In the meanwhile the white coast of England has vanished ; what a pity that I forgot to say good-bye to it. But when I am home, I shall meditate on everything I have seen, and whatever may be the topic of conversation—the education of children or transport problems, literature or the respect of man

for man, horses or easy-chairs, what people are like, or what they should be like, I shall start my remarks in the manner of an expert : " Now in England . . ."

But nobody will be listening to me.

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